

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

*or* AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



**December 2019**

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# THE ROAD TO WISDOM

Swami Vivekananda on  
Judge not that Ye be not Judged

We are always making this mistake in judging others; we are always inclined to think that our little mental universe is all that is; our ethics, our morality, our sense of duty, our sense of utility, are the only things that are worth having. I begin to understand the marvellous saying of Christ: 'Judge not that ye be not judged.' The more we learn, the more we find out how ignorant we are, how multiform and multi-sided is this mind of man. When I was a boy, I used to criticise the ascetic practices of my countrymen; great preachers in our own land have criticised them; the greatest man that was ever born, Buddha himself, criticised them. But all the same, as I am growing older, I feel that I have no right to judge. Sometimes I wish that, in spite of all their incongruities, I had one fragment of their power to do and suffer. Often I think that my judgment and my criticism do not proceed from any dislike of torture, but from sheer cowardice—because I cannot do it—I dare not do it. Then, you see that strength, power, and courage are things which are very peculiar. We generally say, 'A courageous man, a brave man, a daring man', but we must bear in mind that courage or bravery or any other trait does not always characterise the man. The same man who would rush to the mouth of a cannon shrinks from the knife of the surgeon; and another man who never dares to face a gun will calmly bear a severe surgical operation, if need be. Now, in judging others you must always define your terms of courage or



greatness. The man whom I am criticising as not good may be wonderfully so in some points in which I am not. The whole universe is one of perfect balance. I do not know, but some day we may wake up and find that the mere worm has something which balances our manhood. The most wicked person may have some good qualities that I entirely lack. I see that every day of my life. Look at the savage! I wish I had such a splendid physique. He eats, he drinks, to his heart's content, without knowing perhaps what sickness is, while I am suffering every minute. How many times would I have been glad to have changed my brain for his body! The whole universe is only a wave and a hollow; there can be no wave without a hollow. Balance everywhere. You have one thing great, your neighbour has another thing great. When you are judging man and woman, judge them by the standard of their respective greatness. One cannot be in another's shoes. The one has no right to say that the other is wicked.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,  
(Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 2.24-6.

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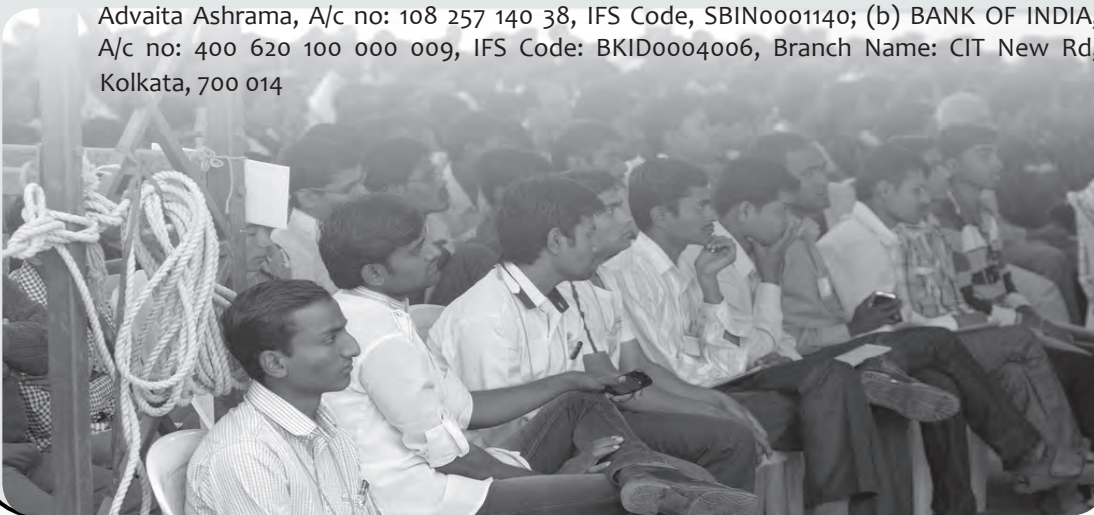
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# TRADITIONAL WISDOM

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

**Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!**

December 2019  
Vol. 124, No. 12

## Maitrayaniya Upanishad

### मैत्रायणीयोपनिषद्

अत्रैक आहुर्गुणः प्रकृतिभेदवशादध्यवसायात्मबन्धमुपागतोऽध्यवसायस्य दोषक्षयाद्धि मोक्षो मनसा ह्येव पश्यति मनसा शृणोति कामः सङ्कल्पो विचिकित्सा श्रद्धाऽश्रद्धा धृतिरधृतिर्हीर्षीर्भीरित्येतत्सर्वं मन एव गुणौघैरुह्यमानः कलुषीकृतश्चास्थिरश्चलो लुप्यमानः सस्पृहो व्यग्रश्चाभिमानित्वं प्रयात इत्यहं सो ममेदं इत्येवं मन्यमानो निबध्नात्यात्मनात्मानं जालेनेव खेचरः अतः पुरुषोऽध्यवसायसङ्कल्पाभिमानलिङ्गो बद्धोऽतस्तद्विपरीतो मुक्तस्तस्मात् निरध्यवसायो निःसङ्कल्पो निरभिमानस्तिष्ठेदेतन्मोक्षलक्षणमेषात्र ब्रह्मपदव्येषोऽत्र द्वारविवरोऽनेनास्य तमसः पारं गमिष्यत्यत्र हि सर्वे कामाः समाहिता इति ।

॥ ६.३० ॥

*Atraika abhurgunah prakriti bhedavashad adhyavasayatma bandham upagato'dhyavasayasya dosha-kshayaddhi moksho manasa hyeva pashyati manasa shrinoti kamah samkalpo vichikitsa shraddha'shraddha dhritir adhritir hrir dhir bhir ityetat sarvam mana eva gunaughair uhyamanah kalushikritash cha asthirash chalo lupyamanah saspriho vyagrashcha abhimanitvam prayata ityaham so mamedam ityevam manyamano nibadhnaty atmanatmanam jaleneva khecharah atah purusho'dhyavasaya samkalpa abhimanalingo baddho'tastadviparito muktastasmad niradhyavasayo nihsamkalpo nirabhimanas tishthetetan mokshalakshanam esha atra brahmapadavy esho'tra dvaravivaro'nenasya tamasah param gamishyati atra hi sarve kamah samahita iti. (6.30)*

Some say, it is the quality by which, through the force of the differentiation and from the destruction of the fault of determination, moksha comes. It is with the mind, indeed, that one sees. It is with the mind that one hears. Desire, conception, doubt, faith, and lack of faith, steadfastness and lack of steadfastness, shame, meditation, fear, all this is truly mind. Borne along and defiled by the stream of qualities, unsteady, fickle, bewildered, full of desire, distracted, one gets into the state of self-love. In thinking, 'I am that person', 'this is mine', one binds oneself with oneself as a bird in a snare. Hence, a person who has the marks of determination, conception, and self-love is bound. One who is the opposite of that is free. Therefore, stand free from determination, free from conception, free from self-love. This is the mark of moksha. This is the path to Brahman in this world. This is the opening of the door here in this world. Through it one will go beyond darkness, where all desires are contained. (6.30)



# THIS MONTH

**W**e chase happiness and happiness eludes us. All of our lives we try to find contentment in more and more and various kinds of external things, places, or persons, and yet we remain miserable. An easy and time-tested path to achieving happiness is discussed in **The Earthquake Model of Happiness**.

K P Uthappa, Kodagu, Karnataka, a retired corporate executive, a long-standing devotee of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and a great admirer of Swami Vivekananda, recounts **A Pilgrimage to Chicago: Following the Footsteps of Swami Vivekananda**.

Dr T V Muralivallabhan, director of the department of economics, Marian College, Kutikkanam, Kerala; educationist; writer; and a popular speaker from Kottayam, Kerala, describes **Yoga for Universal Personality**.

Swami Pavitrananda (d. 1977), a former minister-in-charge of the Vedanta Society of New York and a former editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* talks about **Sri Sarada Devi, The Holy Mother—A Great Saint of India**. This is an edited transcript of a talk he delivered at the Vedanta Society of New York on 8 January 1956.

The broad class 'human beings' can have sub-classes and sub-sub-classes. These classes can be geographical, linguistic, intellectual, or work-related. Swami Satyapriyananda, Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, discusses **The Classification of Human Beings**.

Analysing the deficits of our senses and intellect covered with illusion and inborn tendencies,

we see how the intuitive power is obstructed and our power of discrimination is coloured in our dealing with crucial problems at important junctures of life. Gopal Chandra Bhar, honorary professor of physics at the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute, and former laser scientist at the Burdwan University talks about **Viveka, Power of Discernment: Problems in Implementation**.

The young have wonderful insights on various issues. In *Young Eyes*, such insights are brought to the readers every month. This month Aruansh Khare, studying in class eight at Father Agnel School, Sector 62, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, talks about **India's Biggest Problem: Anger**.

Many wonderful nuggets of wisdom contained in ancient scriptures are difficult to understand. In *Balabodha*, such ancient wisdom is made easy. This month's topic is **Murti**. Understanding this popular word is necessary to understand its meaning.

The phenomenon of a human incarnation of the Absolute God is inexplicable, sometimes even to the incarnation. This is shown in the story **Sri Krishna's Explanation**. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Anmika Kathaigal*.

Mary-Jane Rubenstein, associate professor of religion at Wesleyan University and author of *Strange Wonder: The Closure of Metaphysics and the Opening of Awe* has written the book **Worlds without End: The Many Lives of the Multiverse**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

## *The Earthquake Model of Happiness*

**H**APPINESS CAN BE ACHIEVED only if we know what makes us happy. Each person has a different requirement that makes one happy. Also, when a person fulfils that requirement, which she or he thought would make one happy, happiness eludes the person and one thinks that there is something else that is needed for happiness. This is essentially the cause of all human development, material or philosophical. A human being creates, imagines, or thinks to become happy. It is in such a search of happiness that a human being encounters misery or suffering.

Though human beings have been searching for happiness since they came into existence, they have not been able to pinpoint any material thing that can bring about complete happiness. Sometimes the general populace feels that they have found the one thing that will give them the ultimate happiness, a happiness that would need no other thing to sustain itself, a finality that would be the fitting answer to all attempts to become happy. But, after some time, they realise that the thing they thought would give them everlasting happiness has stopped giving happiness, or worse, has become the cause of misery. Then, they try to find out another source of happiness. The other source supposed to bring everlasting happiness also fails to do so. And this unending cycle of seeking the ultimate happiness and failing in such a pursuit goes on and on.

Why does this happen? One of the reasons for this elusive search for happiness is our emphasis on getting more and more of anything

that will make us happy. We seek more things, more relationships, more wealth, more sense pleasures, and more and more of all that can make us happy. We generally try to find out how much more can make us happy. On the other hand, Indian sages of the past tried to solve the problem of elusive happiness by trying to find

**Indian sages of the past found out how much less one could be happy with.**

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out how much less could one be happy with. They discovered that a minimalist approach to every aspect of life could lead to the path to an everlasting contentment.

When we think that a particular thing, person, or place can give us happiness, we immediately put the responsibility of our happiness on something or someone other than us. In other words, we give the control of our happiness to something or someone. And since most of what we do in our lives, we do to get happy, by giving the control of our happiness to something or someone, we give the control of our lives to something or someone. By doing so, we make things in our life beyond our control. This is so because we cannot control how a particular thing or person, which or who is separate from us, behaves. Thus, in our search for happiness, we give up our control of that happiness and also our control of misery. This paradoxical situation happens over and again in our lives though we see the same thing in the lives of people around us.

This difficult situation arises because of two main problems. One, deep down, we think that we cannot control our happiness or misery. Two, because of such a belief we seek happiness outside of ourselves. The solution to this is quite simple. We need to remind ourselves all the time, in our waking state and also in our dreams, that we are the sole creators of our happiness or misery. This can happen only when our attention to the external conditions is reduced and we start focusing on our inner selves. That is where the title of the present discussion becomes relevant.

Since we seek happiness outside of ourselves, we seek an increase in the magnitude of all that we experience outside of ourselves—in wealth, power, relationships, and sense pleasures. However, all these external attainments or accumulations only distract us from our inner selves. Therefore, our goal should be to reduce the quantum of these distractions to a minimum. So, what do we need externally? Or, do we at all need anything external to ourselves? Since we have to live in this world and interact with our surroundings and maintain our body and mind, we do indeed need some external things. However, we can minimise our external needs.


Imagine you have been told that a severe earthquake is about to hit your house. You have to evacuate your house immediately. What is it that you would take out from your house? Would you not first evacuate your kith and kin? If you get any time other than that, you might remove some other things that are closer to your heart, things that cannot be bought in a shop. These are the essentials you need from the external world. And this is enough for you to carry as mental attachments. Gradually, you can reduce and transcend even these minimal attachments.

This model of happiness could be called the

earthquake model of happiness. But this model does not stop only in limiting your attachment to things that you would evacuate in the case of an impending earthquake. It also requires of us to live every moment of our lives as if we were about to be struck by an earthquake the next second. Not only should we not have any external attachments that we would not be able to remove in a moment's notice, but we should also behave in a manner as though we would die the next moment in an earthquake.

For example, suppose we are displeased with someone and have to communicate our displeasure to that person, mainly so that the cause of our displeasure is not repeated. Most people just hide their anger and let it grow into resentment without having given the other person a chance to resolve the issue. Some just pour out the anger and cause a rift in the relationship. Very few discuss the problem in as impersonal a way as possible and stress that the relationship is important to them and they are just looking to find a way out of a particular kind of behaviour.

If we conduct our lives as though an earthquake could happen any moment, we would always, quite effortlessly, have the third alternative as our behaviour. We would have a healthy psychological life, rootedness, and peace of mind, and would seldom waver from the ultimate aim of life, to find ultimate happiness, a happiness that is beyond all happiness, a happiness that leaves nothing else to be desired for.

In other words, we need to embrace the impermanence of our lives. We need to embrace the impermanence of this world and this universe. Only with such a welcoming acceptance of our apparent uncertain realities, can we understand our true selves and only then can we understand the ultimate Reality, and this understanding would put an end to all suffering. 



# ***A Pilgrimage to Chicago: Following the Footsteps of Swami Vivekananda***

**K P Uthappa**

**F**OR ALL THOSE WHO HAVE READ and got inspired by Swami Vivekananda's biography, the mention of Chicago conjures up the grand vision of his famous Chicago address, the first five words of which, namely 'Sisters and Brothers of America,' had an electrifying effect on the entire audience of nearly seven thousand people and made them to give him a standing ovation so spontaneously. The result was that an unknown monk carrying the universal message of harmony of religions and oneness of God from the ancient civilisation of India became world-famous overnight.

Swamiji was a pilgrim in the best sense of the word, having come to see the Lord in all beings. He was constantly looking for and finding the Divine in all human beings and his sojourn on earth itself was a pilgrimage. From his years of wandering through the length and breadth of India, he acquired a deep insight into India's needs and her greatness. This resulted in his accepting the challenge to travel to Chicago for the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, thus extending his pilgrimage beyond India to the Western world.

Swamiji's unprecedented spectacular success at the Parliament of Religions is known to all. Chicago was Swamiji's major spiritual stronghold in the West ordained by the Divine to spread Indian Vedantic culture to the West, which it needed most to understand the glory of life beyond materialism and powermongering.

For the followers of Swamiji all over the world, Chicago has become a modern 'Tirtha', a place of pilgrimage. All the religions known to us have stressed the importance of pilgrimage as a religious discipline—beginning historically from the great religious sites of India, with its incomparable Himalayas of which each peak can well be considered a deity. Jerusalem in Israel is a tirtha for the five major world religions. Buddhism, from the time of King Ashoka's missionaries, have made Lord Buddha's well-traced stopping-places like 'Buddha Gaya' places of pilgrimage. For Christianity, Jerusalem and Rome are the two main pilgrimage spots. In Islam, pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the five 'pillars of Islam'. All agree that what makes a 'tirtha' is basically the accumulated holy thoughts and deeds of sacrifice by and through the pilgrims who visit those sites, especially sanctified by the saints, who first visited them.

As regards Chicago, Swamiji's visits and sacrifices form the nucleus, along with those of the other great men and women of America who conceived the idea of the Parliament and laboured hard to make it a success. It was the first historical assemblage of all the major religions of the world. Above all, Chicago will be remembered as marking the spectacular introduction to the West of the highest form of Vedanta by one of India's greatest sages—Swamiji.

Since I had a friend in Chicago, Steve Hobart, I went there after visiting Darien, and spent two



*St Chrysostom's Episcopal Church, Chicago*

days with him in this famous city. In the forenoon of the first day, he took me to the famous Sears Tower or the Willis Tower, which is the second tallest building in the US. Its height is 1,450 feet and has 110 floors. The view from the top is fantastic, with tall buildings stretching for a long distance. In the eve-

ning, I went to the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago and spent nearly an hour there, interacting with the then minister-in-charge, Swami Chidananda, who was the president of the Ramakrishna Math, Bull Temple Road, Bengaluru from 1983 to 1989. He was doing a wonderful work. The following day, as suggested by him, I visited the places made memorable by Swamiji's touch, namely, Lincoln's park, Dearborn Avenue, and the famous Art Institute.

### **Lincoln Park**

This is two blocks from Dearborn Avenue, now North Dearborn Street, where Swamiji used to go for a walk, sometimes sit and meditate, and spent some beautiful evenings. This park is beautifully kept and I spent nearly half an hour there. While sitting on one of the park benches, on which Swamiji might have sat and meditated in September-October 1893, a sense of absolute peace and serenity, as also a sense of supreme joy and happiness filled my heart. I mentally knelt and offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God for having blessed me to undertake this pilgrimage. After that, I walked along Dearborn Avenue up to the steps of the St Chrysostom's Episcopal Church.

Swamiji reached Chicago for the second time 'on September 9, probably around mid-day' after spending more than a month in New England. Having lost the address of the Parliament's General Committee and not finding any help, he spent the night very uncomfortably in a railway station, probably the Chicago and North Western station (73). The next day morning, he walked along the streets of Chicago, tired and hungry. After walking a long distance, he sat fully exhausted probably 'on the sidewalk in front of the' above-mentioned St Chrysostom Church, which was established in the same year (74). It was then that the unseen hand of God played a part and a regal looking lady from the house across the street opened the door and invited him inside and took all the trouble to introduce him to the President of the Parliament of Religions. This blessed lady was Mrs George W Hale. As readers of Swamiji's life are aware, Mr and Mrs Hale were treated with respect and regard by Swamiji, so much so that Mrs Hale was dearly referred to as 'Mother Church' and Mr Hale as 'Father Pope'.

### **St Chrysostom's Episcopal Church**

This is one of the oldest churches in Chicago and is in North Dearborn Street. The altar of the church is very beautiful with three scenes from the Bible, namely, the birth of Christ, his crucifixion, and his resurrection.

It is so serene and peaceful inside that I knelt down in front of the altar and offered a prayer of thanksgiving. Opposite to the altar is a beautiful stained glass window with scenes from the Bible. While I was appreciating the same, I felt the tunes of the psalm, 'Glory to god in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men', which was sung by the angels and the multitude of heavenly hosts on that holy night,



*The Art Institute of Chicago*

two thousand years ago.<sup>2</sup> It was a wonderful and peaceful feeling.

### **The Art Institute**

This is in the Michigan Avenue, a part of which has been named as the Vivekananda Way, in honour of Swamiji. This was where the first World's Parliament of Religions was held in September, 1893. It was in the Hall of Columbus that Swamiji delivered his famous first speech at the Parliament. This hall has now been named as the Fullerton Hall, which was then being renovated. On the front wall of this hall a bronze plaque has been erected in honour of Swamiji with these words 'On this site between September 11 and 27, 1893, Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) the first Hindu monk from India to teach Vedanta in America, addressed the World's Parliament of Religions, held in conjunction with the World's Columbian exposition. His unprecedented success opened the way for the dialogue between Eastern and Western religions.'<sup>3</sup> I stood in front of the hall, closed my eyes, and mentally pictured the entire events of that memorable day of 11 September 1893, when the following ideas flashed through my mind:

1. God composed and played through Mozart those musical masterpieces, which are played in many concert halls the world over.

2. God painted through Michelangelo those Fresco masterpieces from the Bible on the roof of Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City.

Likewise, it can be said that since Swamiji bowed to 'Devi Saraswati' and began his speech, Goddess Saraswati alone spoke those five words through him: 'Sisters and Brothers of America.' Hence, each of those five words had a divine intonation behind them and they had a mesmerising and electrifying effect on the entire assemblage of seven thousand people. In the words of Mrs S K Blodgett, an eyewitness of this speech: 'When that young man got up and said, "Sisters and Brothers of America" seven thousand people rose to their feet as a tribute to something they knew not for what.'<sup>4</sup> Dr John Henry Barrows, the chairman of the conference, wrote about the incident in his history of the World's Parliament of Religions that 'there arose a peal of applause that lasted for several minutes' (ibid.).

Through this article, I suggest to every parent, whose children are in the US, to write to their



wards to visit Chicago to follow Swamiji's footsteps and get inspired by his words, his messages, his wisdom, and courage. This will enable them not only to become noble citizens of the world but also to rediscover Chicago in the light of the historical visit of Swamiji, who has transformed this city into a holy pilgrimage. Going to US and not visiting Chicago does not befit an Indian admirer of Swamiji.

Before I end this article, I would like to quote Swamiji's words that exemplifies his love for the motherland and his philosophy of service and also what two eminent personalities have said about him, which makes us understand the historical role that he played in transforming India by pointing out her true significance to the world.

If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed *Punya Bhumi*, to be the land to which all souls on this earth must come to account for Karma, the land to which every soul that is wending its way Godward must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all, the land of introspection and of spirituality—it is India. ... Here is the life-giving water with which must be quenched the burning fire of materialism which is burning the core of the hearts of millions in other lands.<sup>5</sup>


This is the ancient land where wisdom made its home before it went into any other country, ... where the eternal Himalayas, rising tier above tier with their snowcaps, looks as it were into the very mysteries of heaven. Here is the same India whose soil has been trodden by the feet of the greatest sages that ever lived. ... This is the land from whence, like tidal waves, spirituality and philosophy have again and again rushed out and deluged the world, and this is the land from whence once more such tides must proceed in order

to bring life and vigor into the decaying races of mankind (3.285).

Which Indian's love for the motherland will not increase a tenfold after going through the above two electrifying and inspirational statements?

In a letter from Chicago to the then Maharaja of Mysore, Swamiji wrote: 'They alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive' (4.363).

Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism and saved India. But for him we would have lost our religion and would not have gained our freedom. We, therefore, owe everything to Swami Vivekananda. May his faith, his courage, and his wisdom ever inspire us so that we may keep safe the treasure we have received from him. —C. Rajagopalachari.<sup>6</sup>

His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero! —Romain Rolland (50). 

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# Yoga for Universal Personality

Dr T V Muralivallabhan

**A**CROSS THE WORLD, 'more than eight-in-ten people identify with a religious group. A comprehensive demographic study of more than 230 countries and territories conducted by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life estimates that there are 5.8 billion religiously affiliated adults and children around the globe, representing 84% of the 2010 world population of 6.9 billion.'<sup>1</sup> Hence, religion and spirituality cannot be set aside as an insignificant institution in this scientific era, especially when even scientists are after the 'God Particle'! Friedrich Nietzsche famously said: 'God is dead.'<sup>2</sup> The ideologies and political parties that denied God and religion had to accept these things in countries like China, even at the cost of a constitutional amendment.

China wants to establish a 'Chinese Christian theology' suitable for the country. It must be compatible with the country's path of socialism. The Chinese Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, Wang Zuoan said: 'The construction of Chinese Christian theology should adapt to China's national condition and integrate with Chinese culture.'<sup>3</sup>

## India—Land of Religions

India is the land of religions. Almost all the religions of the world could be found in India, thanks to the universal cultural and religious wisdom of India. From time immemorial, India is a land of diversity in terms of belief systems, scriptures, practices, and traditions. The belief system in India ranges from the adamant

characters, the atheists or the materialists to the very liberal Vedantists, who are convinced about the omnipresence of God. The scriptures range from millennia-old Vedas to the recent *kirtanas* or prayer songs. The Indian philosophy of religion is a unifying force behind diverse dimensions of religions. Even though the means are different, the goal of moksha is the same. This principle is applicable to both intra-religious and extra-religious dimensions.

## The Fourfold Path Towards God-Realisation

There is liberty in Hinduism to seek God, as per the taste and preference of an individual. Broadly these paths are termed as bhakti, karma, yoga, and jnana. The Bhagavadgita speaks of all these yogas.

Karma yoga is the science of doing meaningful and fruitful physical work. It is a technique of focusing the physical energy on the work so that the best result is made available to the individual, society, and the world.

Bhakti yoga is the art of directing our emotions towards God and remembering God at every step. Raja yoga is the science of gaining control of our body and mind by rigorously following certain practices. Jnana yoga is the intellectual culmination where one reaches the wisdom of unity transcending the ignorance of diversity.

By yoga, we usually mean raja yoga. It is from rishi Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* that we get a systematic treatise on this subject. This is also known

as *Ashtanga Yoga*, since there are eight steps in this yoga.

All religions are reflections of the experiences of the founders: Christianity is the experience of Jesus Christ, Buddhism is the experience of Lord Buddha, and Hinduism is the experience of a number of rishis. People try to follow the paths shown by these great spiritual giants. Nowadays, we blindly believe in what they said. But, we have the capacity to rise above this average level, and share the same experience that these spiritual giants have left in this world, provided, we are ready to practise the steps sincerely and systematically.

Sincere, devoted, and systematic practice and perception of the teachings, enshrined in the scriptures raise lay people also to the level of the gurus, because as Swami Vivekananda says, 'each soul is potentially divine' and this divinity is universal. Thus, we too have the right to become universal personalities by realising the Truth. But how many of us are able to strictly observe the ten commandments of Bible in our life? The verses from the Koran or the teachings of the Gita have just become scriptures to be quoted and not practised.

Swamiji points out: 'Yoga is the science which teaches us how to get these perceptions. It is not of much use to talk about religion until one has felt it. ... If there is a God we must see him, if there is a soul, we must perceive it; otherwise, it is better not to believe. It is better to be an outspoken atheist than a hypocrite.'<sup>4</sup> The yogi says that there is nothing supernatural within this world. There are only gross and subtle manifestations of energy. The subtle are the causes, and the gross, the effects. The gross can be easily perceived by the senses, not the subtle. The practice of raja yoga will be helpful to acquaint with more subtle perceptions.

Raja Yoga is the ladder connecting our phenomenal existence with the Great Noumenon

and we have to ascend this ladder step by step with great care and circumspection. No step can be ignored or bypassed except at one's own peril. Progress is assured provided the rules of the game are adhered to. And violation of the rules is bound to cause its own peril. Such is Raja Yoga propounded by that ancient sage Patanjali in the form of Sutras or terse aphorisms collectively known as *Yoga Darshana*.<sup>5</sup>

### ***The Eight-fold Path as a Science***

The science of raja yoga is the science of mind, its nature, its power, its extent, and its goal. Mind is the only available instrument to perceive, contemplate, explore, and introspect the many dimensions of truth. Hence the study of the mind that encompasses truth will be the most interesting study.

This is what Raja Yoga proposes to teach. The goal of all its teaching is how to concentrate the minds, then, how to discover the innermost recesses of our own minds, then, how to generalise their contents and to form our own conclusions from them. It, therefore, never asks the question, what our religion is, whether we are Deists or Atheists, whether Christians, Jews, or Buddhists. We are human beings; that is sufficient.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the personality of a yogi is able to encompass the whole humanity. It is beyond caste, religion, class, and creed, and becomes a universal personality.

A precondition to the achievement of a universal personality is the practice of the eight-fold path of yoga. Firstly, *yama* and *niyama* are the moral training that an individual should get to prepare oneself for the progress in yoga. For every endeavour, a person should undergo strict and rigorous training. An astronaut or a soldier has to undergo rigorous physical and mental training before starting the official duties.

*Yama* includes non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-receiving of



any gifts. *Niyama* includes cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study of scriptures, and devotion and surrender to God. We have to develop certain qualities, physical and mental, to prepare ourselves for rigorous practices. The third step is the *asana* or physical posture. These postures train the body to maintain the best and adequate physical condition by equipping the muscles, blood circulation, and strengthen nerves to bear the qualities of a yogi. In various sports, different exercises and diet are prescribed by the coaches to make the person fit to be a good sportsperson.

*Pranayama*: Prana is the basic life-force and *yama* implies its control. If we are able to control the basic life-force, we will be able to control the whole body and the whole world. Swamiji explains: 'Breath is like the fly-wheel of this machine, the body. In a big engine, you find the fly-wheel first moving, and that motion is conveyed to finer and finer machinery until the most delicate and finest mechanism in the machine is in motion. The breath is that fly wheel, supplying and regulating the motive power to everything in this body' (1.143). The proof of yoga is the experience gained through regular practice and these experiences have a universal dimension.

The effect of *pranayama* can be extended from the body to the external nature. 'It is Prana that is manifesting as gravitation, as magnetism. It is Prana that is manifesting as the actions of the body, as the nerve currents, as thought force. From thought down to the lowest force, everything is but the manifestation of Prana. The sum total of all forces in the universe, mental or physical, when resolved back to their original state, is called Prana' (1.148). This realisation brings the universalisation of this personality, limited by the body, mind, and intellect, and also by space, time, and causation.

The gigantic personalities in this world had

this control of prana power. 'The gigantic will-powers of the world, the world-movers can bring their Prana into a high state of vibration, and it is so great and powerful that it catches others in a moment, and thousands are drawn towards them, and half the world think as they do' (1.155). The wonderful works done by great personalities like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven, and Milkha Singh and Usain Bolt in their respective areas have been due to the control, regulation, and focus of prana through rigorous practice, though many of them had not been aware of this. This principle works in spiritual practice too. That part of *pranayama* that attempts to understand and control the physical manifestations of prana is physical science and that part which tries to control the manifestations of prana as mental force by mental means is part of *raja yoga*.

### **Yoga as a Therapy**

Yoga helps to reduce risk factors associated with cardiovascular diseases. In a systematic review of thirty-seven randomised controlled trials, which included 2,768 subjects, investigatory results from Netherlands and the US found 'promising evidence' that yoga is beneficial in managing and improving the risk factors associated with cardiovascular diseases and is a potentially effective therapy for cardiovascular health.<sup>7</sup> It is because of the importance of yoga that 21 June has been declared by the UN as the international day of yoga.

Hence, the Indian yoga, which is an integral part of Hindu Dharma, is a globally accepted physical, mental, and spiritual practice for universal experience, out of which a universal personality can emerge.



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# ***Sri Sarada Devi, The Holy Mother —A Great Saint of India***

**Swami Pavitrananda**

WHEN WE SPEAK of the Holy Mother, it sounds a bit peculiar, and after coming here, I feel it all the more.<sup>1</sup> I do not know who first called her by that English name, the Holy Mother. In India, we call her simply Mother, or to translate accurately, the Revered Mother. When we write in English, we say the Holy Mother, but it does not connote the right sense of the Bengali word. In the West, especially, the word ‘Holy Mother’ will give some other sense, some connotation of Christian theology. But in any case, I think the Western disciples coined that expression. I find in one of Sister Nivedita’s books that she says, ‘Sarada Devi, or “the Holy Mother”, as she is called amongst us.’<sup>2</sup> Naturally, the Western disciples coined that expression. In any case, my subject is ‘Sri Sarada Devi, The Holy Mother—A Great Saint of India’.

Now, what do we mean by the word ‘saint’? In this modern age, when we say the word ‘saint’, what does it mean? Usually we think that he or she was canonised by the Pope, and I read some time ago that there is a complicated process by which one is considered to be a saint and canonised. There are incidents where a person died excommunicated, but afterwards the mistake was found out, even after a century, and she was canonised and called a saint.<sup>3</sup> So, when we utter the word ‘saint’, the feeling comes that it came through the Vatican; or, we may think that he or she has a saintly

character. If one has a saintly character, we call him or her a saint.

Another thing comes into our mind, that of a saint who lived in the remote past. His life comes to us through the eyes of history, but it is a mixture of facts and legends, and we have a sense of remoteness. Yes, that life gives us inspiration, just like some mythological story, where we know that these are not all facts. It is the same with the life of a saint who lived long ago, in the middle ages or earlier. We find that fact come to us mixed with legend and with many stories, which we find hard to believe. Nevertheless, their lives give us valuable spiritual inspiration. But it is hard to believe that there can be a modern saint as great as those of the past. We suffer from the inferiority complex of the present age; we think that these things were possible in the past, but not in the present.

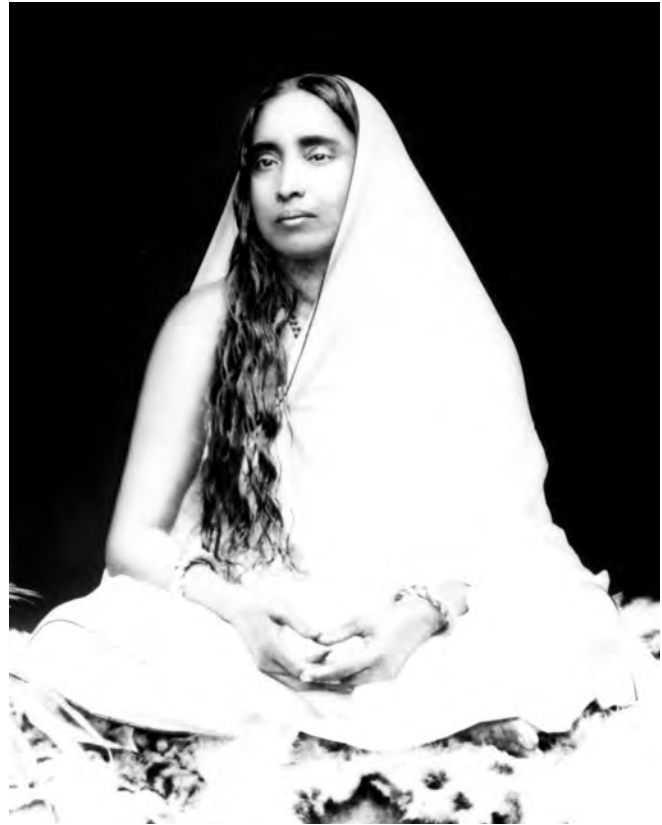
I remember that, while very young, I read a lecture given by Swami Vivekananda in India. He said that if there have been sages and Rishis in the past, be sure that there will be many now. ... They had hundreds of Rishis in ancient India. We will have millions—we are going to have.<sup>4</sup> I remember when I read those lines, I felt a sort of thrill. The bridge between the past and the present was built; the gulf between the past and the present was gone. I thought: ‘Yes, it is a great truth. Why should we think that the saints are only in the past? Why not in the present? If it was possible in the past, it is possible in the present.’

And what do we mean by a saint? Usually it means one who lives an ideal life, who can supply us with spiritual inspiration. In the present age, where do we seek spiritual stimulus, spiritual impetus, spiritual inspiration? Naturally, we go to churches or temples. And what do we get in the churches? How does this spiritual inspiration come to us? What is the effect on us? Usually we hear some spiritual talk. Sometimes it falls flat on our ears and we forget it as soon as we cross the door of the church. If it is deep enough, it gives us a certain amount of spiritual excitement. But very often it is something like a light shower, it dries up immediately, in one or two days. If it is deep enough, uttered by a person who has a strong spiritual sense, the influence might last for a week at best.

But that is not enough. There are persons, let us say they were in the past, from whom a single word, one utterance, was enough to give spiritual inspiration that would last for the whole of one's life. There have been many cases, and there are cases when one's very presence was enough. When you see a light, one need not tell you that it is light. When you have joy, you do not have to look in a book to find out the nature of joy. In the same way, when you get spiritual strength and joy by the mere presence of a person, you need not consult anybody else as to what it is.

Words are not necessarily the medium of spiritual transference of power and strength; words are too insignificant a medium. Words have their value because there is power behind them, but that power can be transferred even without the help of words. If you see such a person, that memory will chase you until you are transformed.

Such was the type of person about whom we are speaking. She scarcely knew how to write; she did not write any book, nor did she give a single lecture. She was not the head of a big



organisation doing worldwide humanitarian works. She did nothing of that kind.

Once she went on a pilgrimage to South India and stopped in the city of Madras. At that time, Annie Besant, the head of the Theosophical Society, was giving lectures that were very powerful. When the people knew that Holy Mother had come to Madras, many came and asked, 'Does she give lectures?' And when they learned that she did not give any lecture, many went away disappointed. But for those who came and saw her even once, that was the precious moment of their whole lives, which wielded a strong influence on their lives for the rest of their days. Even the very spot where she sat was sacred to many.

In Bangalore, there was a small hillock, and once in the evening, she went and sat there in a spiritual mood. A disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Ramakrishnananda, when he learned



*Holy Mother's Rock, Ramakrishna Math, Bull Temple Road, Bengaluru*

about this, ran to that place and bowed down before her. Today that place is considered sacred and there is going to be a small temple there.

So, it is not through lectures that we can show we have spiritual strength, for such spiritual strength is of a different kind. If there is a spiritual person, a really spiritual person, the very spot where he stands is considered to be sacred, because it reminds us of a unique event in the history of the world. For us, it is difficult to understand that there could be such persons. We are not to blame; our ignorance is to blame. Because we do not know, we are in supreme ignorance.

What do we know? How can we recognise that one is a saint? In search of saints, we are disillusioned, and the greater the consciousness of our intelligence, the greater the chance of being duped. I know of several cases where intellectual snobs, proud of their intellectual power, fell an easy victim to charlatans. We cannot even see a saint unless she or he reveals herself or himself to us. Or, if we are fortunate enough to have the mood, we can just feel a glimpse of their personality. Only a saint can understand and recognise a saint. Holy Mother once said: 'How can everybody recognize divinity, daughter? There lay a diamond at a bathing place. Taking it as an ordinary stone, people rubbed the soles of their

feet against it after their bath to remove the dry skin. One day a jeweller went there. Seeing the stone, he immediately recognized that it was a big precious diamond.'<sup>5</sup>

What did the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna say of importance about the Holy Mother? When we joined the organisation, we felt interested in the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji, and even at that time, we did not know that Holy Mother had such an important place in the organisation. At that time, not much literature was available about her, and I am doubtful whether there was anything written except for a few lines in the biography of Sri Ramakrishna by Swami Saradananda. For this reason, our information about her was meagre; frankly speaking, some of us were not interested in her, because we did not know much about her. But when we found that the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, who filled our spiritual lives, through whom we wanted to seek the spiritual ideal, would speak of her with so much reverence, then we began to think about what she was.

What did Swamiji say about her? Swamiji, I think in the year 1894, wrote a letter from America to one of his brother disciples. He was much older than Swamiji, but he wrote to him: 'You have not yet understood the wonderful significance of Mother's life—none of you. But gradually you will know.'<sup>6</sup> Just imagine! In 1894, she was not much known, except to the disciples, who had respect for her. They knew they had great regard for her; there's no doubt about it, and Swamiji was chosen the leader of that group by Sri Ramakrishna himself. He also said: 'To me, Mother's grace is a hundred thousand times more valuable than Father's. Mother's grace, Mother's blessings are all paramount to me. ... Brother, before proceeding to America I wrote to Mother to bless me. Her blessings came, and at one bound I cleared the ocean' (ibid.).



At that time, he was in conflict and did not know what to do. I think he was in West India, in Bombay, or at least on that side, and he wrote to her in Bengal. What should he do? Holy Mother gave the decision, 'Yes, you go'. Imagine the important role she played. How decisive she was, even in the life of Swamiji. Just imagine, if she had said, 'Don't go'. The whole Vedanta movement would not have begun in America, and we would not be here today speaking about her.

When Swamiji returned to India, he went to Calcutta. When he went to Holy Mother's place to see her, he sprinkled Ganges water on himself as he went. We do such things when we go to a sacred place, to a temple for worship. She was literally a goddess to him. He would say to his brother disciples: 'Please pardon me. I am a little bigoted there, as regards Mother' (ibid.). It was not for nothing that Swamiji spoke that way. Swamiji was aggressive. He could express what he felt and he could express very strongly.

There was another brother disciple as great as he was. Sri Ramakrishna praised him as much as he praised Swamiji. Swami Brahmananda was the first president of the Order and he was just the opposite of Swamiji. Quiet, gentle, he would not like to speak out religious feelings. He would hardly like to speak about Sri Ramakrishna. He would say: 'Who will understand?' His feeling was so deep and his sentiment was so sacred that he would not like to say anything even about Sri Ramakrishna.

Once he said about the Holy Mother: 'With her is the key of self-illumination.' And when he would go to see the Holy Mother, he would quake with emotion. While the young brahmacharis would go to the Holy Mother very freely, just as one goes to one's mother, he and his brother disciples would quake with emotion as they went to see her.

Swami Saradananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, was the secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission. He was a great scholarly man, with a highly rational outlook, and was a man of few words. He would not say one unnecessary word, as it were, and as such, whatever he uttered was significant. There was a hundred percent value when he uttered a single word. Quietly, he would say that the work he was doing could be done by anyone else, if Holy Mother wished. She could pick up any other person from the street and get the same work done. That was his feeling.

Now these were the things that we heard when we joined the Order and naturally our regard for her began to increase more and more. It has always been a delicate problem for us, even now, to say in a short answer what she was. We could at best say that she was the wife of Sri Ramakrishna, but it would be sacrilegious for us even to unconsciously suggest that it was a married life in the ordinary sense. We could not express what she was, in a short answer.

Yes, she was married to Sri Ramakrishna and she was married while very young. It would be shocking to you to know that she was married at the age of five years and Sri Ramakrishna was twenty-four. Sri Ramakrishna at that time was constantly in spiritual ecstasy and his mother thought, according to the advice of worldly-wise people, that she would get him married and then he would return to the normal consciousness. It is surprising that Sri Ramakrishna agreed. They could not find a suitable bride and Sri Ramakrishna himself said that in a certain village, four miles away, there was a girl who might be a suitable bride. They were married, although it was not marriage, as you say in India; it was a betrothal.

After that, Sri Ramakrishna went away to Dakshineswar and passed through spiritual storms. His experiences came in thunders and

storms, as it were. The whole world was nothing to him, what to think of his marriage. He lived in another world and people thought that he had become crazy. This news reached Sarada Devi at her home and naturally she was anxious and concerned. Opportunity came, and she went to Dakshineswar. It is strange that Sri Ramakrishna received her with great kindness.

Afterwards, it was said, some persons would pity the Holy Mother thinking that her husband was such. She said: 'Why should you say that? When I am in his presence, I feel a big jar of bliss, as it were, in my heart. My heart is full of bliss and joy.' That is interesting. Though his mind was always in the highest spiritual state, he was extremely kind to her. Never did he utter a word that would give her even the slightest annoyance. She became something like a disciple to him. He gave her training in spiritual life, but soon she outgrew the status of a disciple, and she became his complement, his peer, his helpmate in his spiritual mission.

Once I had to prepare the manuscript of a book called *The Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna*. My idea was that I would put the life of Holy Mother in that book. But when the manuscript was almost ready and when I saw the facts of her life, then I could not put her life in that book. She was a disciple, but when she grew to her full stature, she was the complement to Sri Ramakrishna, and Sri Ramakrishna recognised that in full measure in his lifetime.

Sri Ramakrishna would sometimes send a disciple to her for spiritual instructions. He sent one of his monastic disciples, who became a monk afterwards, to Holy Mother, saying that there was one greater than he. 'Go to her.' One day before Sri Ramakrishna died, when he was on his sickbed, Holy Mother came with food for him. His eyes were closed. Holy Mother stood there and Sri Ramakrishna came back, as if from a great distance.

He said: 'Look at the people of Calcutta; they are like worms squirming in darkness. You must bring light to them. This is not my burden alone. You too shall have to share it.' Another day he had told her, 'Look here, won't you do anything? Must "this" do everything?' (Sri Ramakrishna would not say 'I'.) She replied, 'But what can I do? I am a mere woman.' He said, 'No, no, you will have to do many things.'<sup>7</sup>

As a matter of fact, she did. Sri Ramakrishna had not more than two dozen disciples, I believe. The monastic disciples were twelve in number, and all his lay disciples at best might be twenty.<sup>8</sup> The disciples, the persons who got spiritual shelter in the Holy Mother, could be counted by the hundreds in her lifetime. Now it could be counted by thousands.

But what was the indication of her spiritual power? How could those who came into contact with her feel that she had so much spiritual power? Usually, she lived like an ordinary woman in an orthodox Brahmin family. She lived with her parents, at first, and then with her brothers, an ordinary life in a poor family, doing hard physical work. But why is it that the people who went to her would feel so much strength? That is a mystery. When there is power, it expresses itself.

It is an interesting thing that after coming here I know more of the Holy Mother than I knew in India. It is because last year was the centenary of the Holy Mother and many persons gave their reminiscences. Usually, they would not like to give them, but it was an important occasion and they felt that these things should be kept for posterity. Now I find that these things happened.

Here is one instance: A person came to the Holy Mother's place for spiritual help. Holy Mother took him to the shrine, gave him some instructions, and in the course of that she said:

‘From now on, the effects of all your past deeds, for many, many lives, are gone. Think that you are pure and free, that you are eternal, blissful, and illumined.’

That man later said: ‘At once I felt a thrill within me. I felt as if I had gotten rid of all my past karma, as if I was separate from all my past deeds.’ There is the power and it is not a momentary impulse that had been aroused in him. He lived on that idea. Yes, clouds would come, but he would remember in his saner moments what the Holy Mother had said. It was his strength.

I know of another case, a journalist, who later became the president of the All India Journalists’ Association. He is now dead. I knew him in my college days and I knew that he was a devotee, but I did not know then, that he was a disciple of the Holy Mother.

In his reminiscences, he writes: ‘By nature, I am proud and conceited.’ I knew he was. One day I met him in a park in the evening while I went out for a walk. He was interested in Bengali literature and at that time the great poet Rabindranath Tagore was still living. I said: ‘Who do you think is the important Bengali writer after Tagore?’ He said, ‘I am!’ There might be a little humour in it, but I simply did not say anything; I kept quiet.

And so he said in his book, in beautiful Bengali: ‘By nature I am turbulent, I am proud, I am conceited, but when I go to the Holy Mother, when I am in the presence of the Holy Mother, I feel just like a debtor before a creditor, a debtor who cannot pay his debts.’ In India, a debtor that cannot pay his debts, looks timid and fearful when he is in the presence of his creditor.

Once, he was very young at the time, he was in the presence of the Holy Mother, when devotees were coming. He said: ‘Many devotees would come, and in the presence of the Holy Mother, in an emotional outburst, they would

cry and weep. Sometimes I would laugh to see them doing that. The Holy Mother quietly said: “My boy, you are young. You do not know the degree of suffering in the world. In time, you will know.” She was so sympathetic.’

Towards the end of the book, and that is more beautiful, he said: ‘I am not of devotional nature. I do not believe in beggarly supplication to God for this or that, or even to Holy Mother. I could not do that. But I know she blest me, and is that not enough? Why should I ask anything from her? She blest me; that is enough for me. She showered her affection on me. That is my strength. That is my solace.’ Just see how lives can be transformed simply by a touch!

He narrates another incident:

When I went to Holy Mother’s place, I found a boy who was not only flippant, but wild. I thought: “How could this man come here?” And that wild young man went to the Holy Mother, and she gave him some instruction. He was then in great joy, and he went away to his own place. Now and then I would meet him. The last time was when he was doing relief work in times of plague, in another state, Bihar. I find that he died doing that relief work, and he died with the name of Mother on his lips.

Just imagine, a wild young man, who afterwards could sacrifice his life. He could be daring enough to go for plague relief work, and he died uttering the name of the Mother.

It was not just one incident; there were many, many incidents. I know of a disciple, an important monk who was the president of the Mission afterwards. At that time, I was in a monastery at Mayavati. He said that it was private, but nowadays, I think these incidents are published in books, although the name is not given. He said: ‘I was doing intense spiritual practices at home, before I became a monk. I came to Holy Mother for spiritual instruction. Holy Mother

gave an instruction that was opposed to what I was doing, and I said that I had been doing that thing for a long time.' Holy Mother quietly said, 'No, this is yours.' He said, 'I followed it, and afterwards I found that it was the right thing for me.' Imagine the power.<sup>9</sup>

He told me of another incident. After the passing away of Swamiji, he felt so much grief that he thought he would devote all of his time intensely to spiritual practices. He did and as a result there was brain fog. He consulted physicians; he went to Calcutta, but nobody could help him. And then he went to Holy Mother's country house in her village home.

Holy Mother asked him: 'In what way are you doing your spiritual practices?' And he told her what he was doing. Holy Mother shuddered and said, 'What are you doing!' She gave him instructions, 'Just do this way.' He was cured, not only physically but also spiritually. Just see, when you know these incidents, and you compare, you can see what a powerful personality she was (101-2).

One of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, who was in charge of the management of Belur Math, said: 'The poison, which we cannot assimilate, we send to the Holy Mother.'<sup>10</sup> Just imagine, he said these things. But it was not only her spiritual power; it was mixed up with her motherly feelings. That made her so important. It was not her spiritual grandeur, for in that case it would be awe-inspiring, and one would not be able to go near her. She knew how to conceal her strength.

Sri Ramakrishna said: 'She is like a cat hidden in ashes. She knows how to hide herself.' 'A cat hidden in ashes' is a Bengali expression. Cats in Bengal, in the winter, like to stay near the fire. When the fire is out, the ashes are a bit warm, and the cat hides in the ashes. And so, Sri Ramakrishna would give an illustration that way: 'She is like a cat hidden in ashes!' She knew

how to hide herself. She knew how to come down to your level. She knew how to make you at ease. Because of that, any person who would go near her, would find her a mother, and not only like an earthly mother, but much more intense than that. Just imagine, strangers came from different places, sometimes coming from other countries. She had several Western disciples, and they would go to her and at once they found her, the Mother.

Sometimes it was dangerous. Sister Nivedita, when she went to India for the first time, met Holy Mother, and she said: 'I lived with the Holy Mother, but Holy Mother belonged to an orthodox Brahmin family. If she allowed any Westerner to live with her, she could be socially persecuted at home.' But the motherly feeling was stronger in her than any consideration. She allowed Sister Nivedita to live with her. Sister Nivedita afterwards said: 'If I knew what embarrassment it was to her, if I knew what a great risk she undertook, I would consider thrice before making such a request to her.'

Had I deeply understood at the time, the degree of social embarrassment which my rashness might have brought, not only upon my innocent hostess but also on her kindred in their distant village, I could not have acted as I did. At any cost, I must in that case have withdrawn. As it was, however, I imagined caste to be only a foolish personal prejudice—which must yield to knowledge—against some supposed uncleanness of foreign habits, and thus cheerfully assuming all the ignorance to be on her side, confidently forced myself upon this Indian lady's hospitality.<sup>11</sup>

But Holy Mother's motherly feeling was much greater than all this.

It happened even in the time of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna was strict with his younger disciples, who afterwards were to be



monks. He would be strict about their diet, and he prescribed that they should eat very little at night. Holy Mother served them food and she would serve them more food than would get approval from Sri Ramakrishna. Once Sri Ramakrishna asked her: 'You feed them so much. Who will take care of their spiritual life? Will you?' He said that, not requesting, just as if she were spoiling them, as it were.

Holy Mother quietly said, 'Yes, I will'. Holy Mother was so self-effacing, she would not say 'I'. But imagine, at that trying moment, she said, 'I will'. So, sometimes her motherly feelings would get the better of her spiritual grandeur. And it was very important, for because of that, many persons would go, and get spiritual help from her.

And it was not always that the big Calcutta people who would go to her. She had the same affection for ordinary, even despised people. I heard directly from a person, who belongs to the depressed class, who would not be allowed to enter into the house of any person, much more the house of a Brahmin family.

He went to her place in her village home. Many persons would go to her village home because thereby one would easily get access to her. In Calcutta, naturally, there would be persons to protect her. She gave spiritual instructions to him and after that she said, 'Come'. He went to her room and she said, 'Close the door'. And she fed him. You see, if you know the situation that such a despised person, a pariah, would not ordinarily be allowed to go into the house, but Holy Mother fed him and herself served dishes to him. Not only that, afterwards she herself cleaned the spot and washed the dishes. It would be considered sacrilegious for a person even to allow such things to happen, and I simply shuddered that she could do that. That person, as he was telling me, shed tears that she did that.

She did not do this only for that man, there

were other cases. There was a Mohammedan, who was a robber. He would come to her place, and the villagers would say: 'He is a robber and you allow him to come here! He is a dangerous person.' But Holy Mother tamed him with her kindness and affection. He was a different person when he would come to the Holy Mother.

So, not only big persons but also humble persons, everybody had an equal share of affection from her. But the beauty is that that affection was spiritually uplifting. It was not simply human affection, for it was spiritual strength that she transfused that way.

And in ordinary life, she was self-giving, she was all patience. Even as a human ideal, she was superb. She did not demand the slightest thing from anyone. When suffering came, she suffered. Nowadays, she is much respected, literally worshipped, but she had to pass through her due share of trials and tribulations.

It was not simply because she was the wedded wife of Sri Ramakrishna that she commands respect. By her own right, she does that. After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, she was in his village home. At that time, for a period, she passed through dire poverty. As they say in Bengal, even if she had rice, she had no salt to eat with it. Literally, she passed through that period,




and she would not utter a single word about her sufferings. She was perfectly unselfish.

Sometimes I think; what is meant by perfection? Yes, she had perfect purity, she was perfectly unselfish, she was perfectly self-giving, and she was the embodiment of forgiveness and patience. If you narrate this, all these things combined do not give the true picture of what she was. She was much more than the combination of all these things. When you get her full picture, she was much bigger than that.

One disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Latu, had no learning, but he had great spiritual experience, and he would say things in a much clearer way than one could say with scholarliness. He said to a disciple with respect to Holy Mother: 'You cannot know Holy Mother that way. When you undergo severe spiritual practices, then only will you know what the Holy Mother is.' It is so true. I can give you facts, and I thought that instead of making any comment of my own, I would simply give you certain facts from her life. But that would not be enough. Only if one evolves spiritually does one get a glimpse of her personality. Otherwise, it would be hard for us to believe that these things could be true.

Yes, if there could be saints in the past, there can be saints in the present age also. But many will have to wait for years, when it becomes a past event. Then many people will know, and as time passes, a larger and larger number of persons will be interested in her, and a larger and larger number of persons will feel uplifted that a soul like her was born in this world.

Twenty or thirty years before her passing away, it would be difficult to get a picture of the Holy Mother, people kept her so guarded. They did not like to expose her to people who would not understand her. But in her own right, she is spreading her message. And those will be blessed, if they can understand, or even

try to understand what she was. At least, let us have spiritual inspiration from her life; let us get consolation from the fact that there was such a life. That is enough for us, to get spiritual help and transformation. 

## Notes and References

1. This is an edited transcript of the talk given by Swami Pavitrnananda on 8 January 1956 at the Vedanta Society of New York. Pavitrnananda has also written a short biography of the Holy Mother. See Swami Pavitrnananda, *A Short Life of the Holy Mother* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2017). For more discussion on Pavitrnananda's views on the Holy Mother see Pravrajika Gayatriprana, 'Sarada Devi, A Power that Worked in Silence: The Testimony of a Ramakrishna Order Monk', *American Vedantist*, 10/3 (Fall 2004), 15–20 <[https://americanvedantist.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Vol\\_10\\_No\\_3.pdf](https://americanvedantist.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Vol_10_No_3.pdf)> accessed 30 October 2019.
2. Sister Nivedita, *The Master as I Saw Him* (Kolkata: Udbodhan, 2004), 119.
3. St Joan of Arc (1412–31), who became a martyr fighting to recover France from English domination, was canonised as a Roman Catholic saint in 1920.
4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1–8, 1989; 9, 1997), 3.282–4.
5. *The Gospel of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 2002), 303.
6. *Complete Works*, 7.484.
7. Swami Chetanananda, *Sri Sarada Devi and Her Divine Play* (St Louis: Vedanta Society of St Louis, 2015), 147.
8. The actual number of monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, including Swami Vivekananda, is sixteen.
9. Swami Pavitrnananda is referring to Swami Virajananda, who was the sixth president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. See Swami Shraddhananda, *The Story of an Epoch: Swami Virajananda and His Times* (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2001), 39–40.
10. Swami Pavitrnananda is referring to Swami Premananda.
11. *The Master as I Saw Him*, 119.

# The Classification of Human Beings

Swami Satyapriyananda

THE BROAD CLASS ‘human beings’ can have sub-classes and sub-sub-classes. One common way of the classification of human beings is based on geographical region: American, Indian, African, Pakistani, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and so on. We can have further sub-classes as a Bengali, Tamilian, Maharashtrian, Bihari, Telugu, Malayali, and so on under the major classification, Indian. This is a linguistic classification. One can have intellectual classification such as Nobel laureate, scientist, artist, chartered accountant, and so on. Or, there can be work-related classification such as doctor, engineer, surgeon, and so on. This is the human approach to dividing people into groups and sub-groups. It is seen that there is a greater intimacy and clinging amongst people of the same group. Doctors can have a joint conference, for example. However, when a divine being classifies human beings, it is on the basis of spiritual achievements and latent capabilities. This is a major difference and it is so because a divine being concentrates one’s attention on the divinity manifest in a human being and the qualities that enable one to transform the latent divinity into patent divinity. The message of such a divine being, Swami Vivekananda, to humanity is ‘how to make it [this divinity] manifest in every movement of life.’<sup>1</sup>

## Classification: Type 1

Sri Krishna devotes the verses in the sixteenth chapter of the Bhagavadgita to classify people into two broad types: those possessed of divine

wealth or holy treasures and those possessed of demoniac wealth or evil tendencies. Divine wealth is to be coveted just as demoniac wealth is to be shunned. It is necessary for one keen on spiritual advancement to migrate from demoniac wealth regime to divine wealth regime through personal effort, God’s grace, and blessings of a realised soul.

**Divine Wealth** • In the first three verses, Sri Krishna describes the characteristics of one born with divine wealth. These are: ‘Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in the yoga of knowledge, charity, self-control, sacrifice, study of the scriptures, austerity, uprightness; non-injury, truthfulness, absence of anger, self-sacrifice, tranquillity, freedom from slander, kindness to beings, non-covetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness; and, boldness, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence of hatred, absence of conceit.’<sup>2</sup> This divine wealth leads to liberation and that is the reason why it is coveted. Anyone can understand that there is great merit in having divine wealth. Sri Krishna tells Arjuna specifically not to worry or grieve because he was in possession of divine wealth.

**Demoniac Wealth** • The demoniac wealth, on the other hand, leads one to bondage. The demoniac wealth is stated briefly: ‘Ostentation, arrogance, self-conceit, anger, rudeness, and ignorance belong to one who is born of demoniac wealth’ (16.4), and elaborated later:

Persons rich in demoniac wealth do not know what to do and what to refrain from; they have neither purity nor good conduct nor truth

(16.7). They describe the world as being without a truth, without a basis, without a God, and brought about by mutual union—as nothing but originating in lust (16.8). Holding this view, these ruined souls of small intellects and of fierce deeds are born for the destruction of the world as its enemies (16.9). Resorting to insatiable desires, full of hypocrisy, pride, and arrogance, they, of impure vows, act holding false views through delusion (16.10). Beset with immense cares ending only with death, regarding gratification of sensual enjoyment as their highest aim, and convinced that this is all (16.11); bound by a hundred ties of expectation and given to lust and anger, they strive to collect by foul means storehouses of wealth for sense gratification (16.12). ‘This has been gained today by me; this desire I shall obtain; this wealth is mine, and this other too will be mine’ (16.13). ‘That enemy has been slain by me, and the others too I will slay. I am the Lord, I am full of enjoyments, I am successful, powerful, and happy’ (16.14). ‘I am rich and of noble birth; who else is equal to me? I will sacrifice, I will make gifts, I will rejoice’. Thus, deluded by ignorance (16.15), perplexed by various fanciful ideas, entangled in the net of delusion, and addicted to the gratification of desires, they fall into foul hell (16.16). Self-esteemed, arrogant, filled with vanity and haughtiness due to material wealth, they ostentatiously perform sacrifices in name, disregarding prescribed methods (16.17). Possessed of self-conceit, power, insolence, lust, and anger, these cavilling people perform sacrifices, hating God residing in their own bodies and in those of others (16.18). These cruel haters, the most degraded of men, I hurl perpetually among demoniacal species in the transmigratory worlds (16.19). Obtaining demoniac bodies, and deluded birth after birth, far from attaining divine stature, they fall into still lower conditions (16.20).

These are definitely poor specimens of humanity and in today’s world, sadly, they far outnumber the jewels among humanity, who possess

divine wealth. That is the reason for the poor condition of the world we live in today.

**Gates to Hell** • ‘There are three types of gates to hell, destructive of the self—lust, anger, and greed; therefore, these three should be shunned’ (16.21). ‘The person, who has got rid of these three gates to darkness, practises what is good for one-self and thus goes to the supreme goal’ (16.22).

**Scriptural Injunctions** • The importance of scriptural injunctions is highlighted next: ‘One who, setting aside the ordinances of the scriptures, acts under the impulse of desire, attains neither perfection nor happiness nor the supreme goal’ (16.23). The scriptures are the outpourings of God and so they should be treated as God’s mandate. They have the special power to mould the character of a person who, setting aside the ordinances of the scriptures, acts under the impulse of desire, merely following family traditions.

Whether a person is by nature sattvic or rajasic or tamasic, following the scriptures checks the inherent tendency and makes all actions sattvic. Otherwise, one’s *shraddha* will be rajasic or tamasic, and one will not reach the supreme human goal. ‘So, let the scriptures be your authority in ascertaining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Having known what has been prescribed by the scriptures, you should act in this matter’ (16.24). By differentiating between the divine and the demoniac wealth, it is shown in the sixteenth chapter of the Gita that the pure-souled alone are fit for the knowledge of Truth.

### **Classification: Type 2**

Sri Krishna states: ‘Four kinds of people who have done virtuous deeds worship God: the distressed person, the aspirant after knowledge, the seeker of wealth, and the person of knowledge’ (7.16). It is notable that they all believe in divine



intervention that presupposes belief and faith in God. 'Of these, the person of knowledge who is constantly in communion and single-minded in devotion excels. To the person of knowledge, God is very dear indeed and such a person is dear to God' (7.17). An important observation is made here. The bond of love between the spiritual person and God is mutual. If God is dear to me, I too am dear to God. Thus, it is logical that one should act in such a way as pleases God, who is dear to the aspirant, so that one in turn becomes very dear to God, *bhaktiman yah sa me priyah* (12.17).

Happily one who worships God with the idea of getting a remedy from one's present state of distress, or amassing earthly wealth, or success in one's spiritual aspirations, is also considered by God to be a worshipper. That is so because they worship God for getting one's blessings. 'All of these worshippers are indeed noble, but the person of realisation is God's very Self; for, with one's mind fixed on God, one has taken refuge in God alone as the highest goal' (7.18). 'At the end of innumerable births, the person of realisation takes refuge in God knowing that all this is God. Such a saint is exceedingly rare' (7.19).

Deprived of discrimination by particular desires, some worship other deities observing particular rites, being swayed by their own nature (7.20). Whatever form a particular devotee wishes to worship with faith, concerning that form of god and mode of worship alone, the supreme God makes one's faith unflinching (7.21). Endowed with that faith, one worships that deity, and from that deity gets one's desires fulfilled, which are indeed granted by the supreme God alone (7.22). But that fruit of these persons of little understanding has an end; the worshippers of gods go to the gods, but the devotees of the supreme God come to the supreme God (7.23).

By whatever way people worship me, be it possessed of desires or as free from them, even

so do I accept them and grant that wished-for result; for, in all ways, even the worshippers of minor gods, walk in the path of supreme God alone (4.11). When minor gods are worshipped, I alone am being worshipped. People worship minor deities because in this world of human beings, the fruit of action comes quickly. People seldom worship the supreme God for attaining moksha which is the result of knowledge, because knowledge is hard to attain (4.12).

### Classification: Type 3

There is another classification based on: a) the religion one subscribes to, b) the language one speaks, c) the caste to which one belongs, and d) the dollar-caste, as it is called, that is, wealth.

The religion or language based classification has led to identification of the physical number of the members of each religious or linguistic group within a geographical boundary as a percent of the total population, and the granting of religious or linguistic minority status for the groups with a small representation. This has created unpleasant situations as it indirectly means more privilege for the minority and less for the majority. There is a never-ending battle between various groups, and we return again and again to that question of how long such privileges ought to be entertained and whether such privileges are extended in all nations; if not, why only in some nations?

The caste-based classification was done by Sri Krishna as stated by him in the Gita: 'The four castes were created by me according to the differences in aptitudes and actions. Though the author of them, know me, the immutable, as non-agent (4.13).' In today's world, appointments for various jobs are made after detailed interviews. There is the test for skill in expression, to the extent of deciding whether a person is good or trainable, a test for technical skill, an aptitude test, an emotional quotient test, an

intellectual quotient test, a general knowledge test, a spiritual quotient test, a test for ability to work harmoniously with others in a team, and an interview by the human resources personnel—all this may be called personality tests. During the training period, an assessment is made again of how much rigour one can undergo. This process is followed more or less by all corporate companies to select the most suitable persons for a job. No one objects to this system of differentiating between people interested in a job!

The four castes, varna, are: brahmana, kshatriya, vaishya, and shudra. The four stages, ashrama, of life are: brahmacharya, student life; *garhasthya*, householder; *vanaprastha*, recluse; and sannyasa, monasticism. The idea behind varna and ashrama is certainly noble. People differ in their psycho-physical apparatus and all cannot perform every task equally efficiently. So, sooner than later, there will arise frustration in those poor performers. Hence, as mentioned in the Gita, the caste-based classification defined four castes with their associated works:

The duties of the brahmana, kshatriya, and vaishya as also of the shudra, are clearly divided according to the dispositions born of their own nature (combination of sattva, rajas, tamas) (18.41). Serenity, self-control, austerity, purity, forbearance, and also uprightness, knowledge, realisation, and faith, are the duties of a brahmana born of one's nature (18.42). Heroism, boldness, firmness, dexterity, not fleeing from the battle, generosity, and lordliness, are the duties of a kshatriya born of one's nature (18.43). Agriculture, cattle-rearing, and trade are the duties of a vaishya born of one's nature; and work of the nature of service is the duty of a shudra born of one's nature (18.44).

A shudra being endowed with dullness, inertia, laziness, and sleep, is only fit for the work of the nature of service. This is not to be misconstrued as social discrimination, because such

a person does not have the requisite qualification for any other type of work in society—and if such a person attempts any other work, one will be a failure and become frustrated and depressed, eventually becoming a moral wreck—and such a person also being a member of society has to have some means for sustenance. It is also to be noted that if a person of this type does not perform one's duty, the entire social fabric will fall to pieces and people belonging to other categories will have to leave their place of residence en masse for healthier pastures! So, in spite of the nature of one's work, everyone is a very important member of society—as important or sometimes even more important than the others. It is easy to understand that a king or a priest will fare poorly as a cobbler; and a cobbler too will fare poorly as a king or a priest.

Further, it is said that in and through the work one performs, each can attain moksha. 'Devoted to one's own duty, one attains perfection. Listen how one engaged in one's own duty attains perfection' (18.45). 'From whom proceeds the activity of all beings, and by whom all this is pervaded, worshipping God through one's own duty, one attains perfection' (18.46). This is the secret of work and the underlying caste system. No one is barred from attaining perfection if the work is performed with the right spirit. What is important in the language of Sri Ramakrishna is to know which lid, category of people, goes with which vessel, work.

This caste system also had the benefit of avoiding from any caste member, competition to the work assigned to another caste. This will avoid such situations as arising from Arjuna's desire to take to sannyasa giving up his duty as a kshatriya to fight a war against unrighteousness. Sri Krishna openly declared: '*Paradharma bhayavahah*; the duty of another is fraught with danger' (3.35). If one performs a work not in

consonance with one's psychophysical makeup, then one comes to grief.

The dollar-caste refers to the social divide rampant in advanced countries, which separates one from another on the basis of money power, social status, and so on. This is the worst type of grouping one can conceive of.

### **Classification Made by Sri Ramakrishna**

Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly pointed out that the goal of human life is God-realisation. Therefore, his classification of humanity is quite simple, straightforward, and based on the perception whether one is born a God-realised soul, a bound soul, or a struggling soul, or one who has realised God through struggle. He says:

In this creation of God there is a variety of things: men, animals, trees, plants. Among the animals some are good, some bad. There are ferocious animals like the tiger. Some trees bear fruit sweet as nectar, and others bear fruit that is poisonous. Likewise, among human beings, there are the good and the wicked, the holy and the unholy. There are some who are devoted to God, and others who are attached to the world.

Men may be divided into four classes: those bound by the fetters of the world, the seekers after liberation, the liberated, and the ever-free. Among the ever-free we may count sages like Narada. They live in the world for the good of others, to teach men spiritual truth. Those in bondage are sunk in worldliness and forgetful of God. Not even by mistake do they think of God. The seekers after liberation want to free themselves from attachment to the world. Some of them succeed and others do not. The liberated souls, such as the sadhus and mahatmas, are not entangled in the world, in 'woman and gold'. Their minds are free from worldliness. Besides, they always meditate on the Lotus Feet of God.

Suppose a net has been cast into a lake to catch fish. Some fish are so clever that they are



never caught in the net. They are like the ever-free. But most of the fish are entangled in the net. Some of them try to free themselves from it, and they are like those who seek liberation. But not all the fish that struggle succeed. A very few do jump out of the net, making a big splash in the water. Then the fishermen shout, 'Look! There goes a big one!' But most of the fish caught in the net cannot escape, nor do they make any effort to get out. On the contrary, they burrow into the mud with the net in their mouths and lie there quietly, thinking, 'We need not fear any more; we are quite safe here'. But the poor things do not know that the fishermen will drag them out with the net. These are like the men bound to the world.

The bound souls are tied to the world by the fetters of 'woman and gold'. They are bound hand and foot. Thinking that 'woman and gold' will make them happy and give them security, they do not realise that it will

lead them to annihilation. When a man thus bound to the world is about to die, his wife asks, 'You are about to go; but what have you done for me?' Again, such is his attachment to the things of the world that, when he sees the lamp burning brightly, he says: 'Dim the light. Too much oil is being used.' And he is on his death-bed!


The bound souls never think of God. If they get any leisure they indulge in idle gossip and foolish talk, or they engage in fruitless work. If you ask one of them the reason, he answers, 'Oh, I cannot keep still; so I am making a hedge'. When time hangs heavy on their hands they perhaps start playing cards.<sup>3</sup>

### Classes of Perfect Souls

Some souls realise God without practising any spiritual discipline. They are called *nityasiddha*, eternally perfect. Those who have realised God through austerity, japa, and the like, are called *sadhanasiddha*, perfect through spiritual discipline. Again, there are those called *kripasiddha*, perfect through divine grace. These last may be compared to a room kept dark a thousand years, which becomes light the moment a lamp is brought in.

There is also a class of devotees, the *bhathasiddha*, that is to say, those who have suddenly attained God-vision. Their case is like that of a poor boy who has suddenly found favour with a rich man. The rich man marries his daughter to the boy and along with her gives him land, house, carriage, servants, and so forth. There is still another class of devotees, the *svapnasiddha*, who have had the vision of God in a dream (483).

Time and again Sri Ramakrishna urges devotees to give up mundane activities and devote time and energy to cultivate devotion to God. The blessings he is eager to shower on humanity is that the divine consciousness in them may be awakened. The Holy Mother said that the

devotees form a caste by themselves. This caste is 'those with divine wealth' and sets them apart from those of demoniac wealth. 

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# Viveka, Power of Discernment: Problems in Implementation

Gopal Chandra Bhar

**P**ROBLEMS AND UNCERTAINTIES are part of our life. One wrong decision is enough to upset a person's career. The noted psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) of the last century said: 'I had learned to see that the greatest and most important problems of life are all fundamentally insoluble. They must be so, because they express the necessary polarity inherent in every self-regulating system. They can never be solved but only outgrown.'<sup>1</sup> Swami Bhajanananda argues that Jung had understood the important principle discovered in India: 'The higher the plane of consciousness we attain, the greater becomes our knowledge and power to deal with the problems of life.'<sup>2</sup>

Analysing the deficits of our senses and intellect covered with illusion and inborn tendencies, an attempt is made to show how our intuitive power is obstructed and our power of discernment is coloured in our dealing with crucial problems at important junctures of life. It is with the holistic knowledge and wisdom acquired with the purity of mind that one can regain clarity of vision, so as to lead a successful and peaceful life. Swami Vivekananda said: 'The only explanation must come from beyond the sense-plane, we must rise to the superconscious, to a state entirely beyond sense-perception.'<sup>3</sup>

## Introduction

Swamiji pointed out:

We are caught, though we came to catch. We came to enjoy; we are being enjoyed. We came



Carl Gustav Jung

to rule; we are being ruled. We came to work; we are being worked. ... We are being worked upon by other minds, and we are always struggling to work on other minds. We want to enjoy the pleasures of life; and they eat into our vitals. We want to get everything from nature, but we find in the long run that nature takes everything from us—depletes us, and casts us aside (2.2).

This is true almost for all of us. One wrong decision, one careless step, is enough to ruin one's career and peace of mind, since life is full of uncertainties, conflicts, and problems. Patanjali says in his *Yoga Sutra*: '*Duhkhameva sarvam vivekinah*'; the persons endowed with spiritual discrimination regard all experiences as painful.'<sup>4</sup> Material objects of enjoyments cannot give us lasting happiness; they only lead us to pain and sorrow.

Living beings do have some kind of discernment all the time. Plants discern between light and shade, animals choose what to eat or not. But the human being is equipped with a unique discerning faculty, *viveka*. Everyone possesses this faculty in varying degrees, but it is generally used only in the realm of common objects or ideas in the relative plane. With the help of *viveka*, our intellect does all types of differentiation. From childhood onwards, *viveka* develops discerning ideas, emotions, morality, justice, governance, and so on.

At every level in daily conduct, we unconsciously practise *viveka*, otherwise, we will suffer endlessly. Something that is good in a certain situation, could be not so good when the circumstances change. The human being has special privilege of judging things, right and wrong. As sub-human animals are devoid of this faculty of discernment, the results of their actions do not accumulate. While thinking human beings are endowed with this power of distinguishing between good and bad actions, there is no way out for them but to reap the consequences of their actions. But they are not always able to use that power rightly. Whether this judging is undisputable is determined by the purity of mind of the judge. An impure mind cannot lead to the Truth.

There are two categories of discernment, objective dharma-*adharma* leading to moral values and noble ideals, and subjective dealing with *nitya-anitya*, permanent-ephemeral.

The basic problems of life cannot be solved through ordinary means, but one has to go to the source of these problems. One might find some temporary solution through reasoning but the ultimate solution is through transcending the problems. In order to solve the problems of life and find the truth, the human being must rise to a consciousness level higher than the mind and reason, which belong to the limited realm

of ignorance. So what is the solution? The Mahabharata directs that great persons tread only the path well-lit by the light of discernment. It is the power of wisdom and not the power of muscle. From the philosophical standpoint, this discernment is the function of *buddhi*, intellect, involving both the faculties of intuition and will. The former is introspection, while the latter is heavily determined by one's attitude and *shraddha*. A person who does not believe in the importance of virtue, cannot practise discernment between virtue and vice.

The *Katha Upanishad* says that the objective of our inner vision is to examine, select, and adopt *shreya*, the long-term beneficial goal, rather than *preya*, the immediate apparent pleasurable goal.<sup>5</sup> A person's natural tendency is to tread the path of ease and comfort avoiding restraints and responsibilities. The senses are so powerful that they drag the mind to the immediate pleasure. Every one aspires for unalloyed joy, uninterrupted peace, absolute freedom, and cessation of misery. The main difficulty in choosing the right type lies in the fact that the higher forms of happiness are not immediately obvious. So naturally one tends to stick to *preya* leaving aside *shreya*.

The reason for the tendency to lean towards *preya* has been elaborated in the *Katha Upanishad*, which states that our sense organs are inclined to 'see' the world outside and not to 'see' the Self inside, for which one needs long practice with patience. The inner Self is realised only by some wise discerning persons, who turn inward the focus of the sense organs (2.1.1). We must see not only the appearance, but also what lies behind it through spiritual wisdom. That is why the *Mundaka Upanishad* says: 'The Self is not comprehended through the eye, nor through speech, nor through the other senses; nor is it attained through austerity or actions.'<sup>6</sup>

Curiosity can only lead to increased levels of knowledge and skill, but not necessarily lead to wisdom. However, for the spiritual aspirant, guidance comes from *viveka*, the light of conscience. This *viveka* or discernment between the real and the unreal is an essential requisite for a spiritual aspirant. One has to discern the worthwhile from the worthless in the world, identifying the eternal from non-eternal objects through *viveka*. A non-eternal object is *vikari*, changing and is characterised by six steps of change from its birth to its destruction.

### ***The Shortcomings of Our Sense Organs***

Every human is equipped with five sense organs but each of them has inherent limitations, though some lower animals have some sense organs that are more sensitive than humans. However, it is through these sense organs that we perceive and understand the external world. Sensual enjoyment is attended with various defects. It leads to pain, weakness, severe exertion, craving, and mental restlessness.

The modern technology can extend, modify, and improve the capabilities of the senses to a certain extent. The human field of vision is not a 360-degree full roundabout, but about 120-degree horizontal and 135-degree vertical vision. 'Angular resolution' is one of the terms used to describe an optical device's ability to distinguish very small details. The typical set of human eyes have an angular resolution in the order of one arc minute, a unit of angular measurement, give or take a few arc seconds. The most well-known of human sensory limitations is that the typical human eye is only capable of perceiving light at wavelengths between 390 and 750 nanometres. Of course, calling it the 'visible' spectrum is a bit of a misnomer, as plenty of animals are capable of perceiving light with frequencies outside this relatively narrow band of electromagnetic radiation.

The range of frequencies that can be picked up by the human ear is usually cited as 20–20,000 Hz; however, the upper limit on that range tends to decrease pretty steadily with age. The sense of taste is arguably the weakest of the human senses. The limits of odour detection have proven difficult to pin down. The sense of touch is remarkably complex and involves the detection of everything from pressure, to itchiness, to temperature. But the receptors in our skin are not distributed in a uniform way around our bodies. Some parts of our body, such as our fingers and lips, have more touch receptors than the other parts of our body.

These limitations of human perception have a direct impact on how we understand the world and the beyond. Swamiji said: 'Identify yourself with Atman, not with human limitations. Dis-identify yourself with the body, and all pain will cease.'<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, when we observe a pair of opposites, we normally compare the difference of kind and not just the difference of degree. This is easier for having positive contrasts like heat and cold, rich and poor. This involves the feeling of consciousness in temperature and wealth respectively. But it is difficult to understand the concepts of negative contrasts like differences in the degree of motion without understanding the concept of rest. Here, the problem is in understanding the concept of an unchangeable substratum.

Apart from these sense organs, mind is also important, which has been categorised as the sixth sense organ in the Gita.<sup>8</sup> Mind is part of the subtle body and influences not only the physical brain, but the entire body through the sense organs. The brain and the mind are intimately connected. However, mental activity is not merely brain activity, but the mind is carried over across lifetimes. So the truth that we experience through our senses is but the truth contained

within the narrow boundaries as determined by the senses. Moreover, the mind is the controller of all the five sense organs through thinking, feeling, and willing.

The mind usually works with the external world through the senses that enable us to grasp the sense objects. Normally the eye is capable of capturing eighty-two per cent of the sense objects, ear ten per cent, and the remaining three sense organs of smell, taste, and touch only eight per cent of perception. Each sense organ, however, is associated with its own individual limitations as stated above. These limitations do have some constructive purpose. For example, nature has provided us eyelids for closing our eyes, while the ears are always open. This could be construed as a message of Nature, that we need to restrain what we see and be always alert of what we hear.

This limitation of human perception has a direct impact on how we understand the universe. What comes in the mind is unaffected irrespective of whether it is channelised into one, more, or all the five senses. For instance, the total amount of water that can flow from a reservoir would remain the same, irrespective of the number of outlets. The intensity or depth of perception of the remaining sense organs will be far more if one of the sense organs does not function or is wilfully withdrawn. A golden example is Helen Keller, who overcame the adversity of being deaf and blind to become one of the leading humanitarians of the twentieth century.

### ***Characteristic Features of the Mind***

When our mind thinks and reasons, it can see only a part at a time and so cannot have an integral view of things. And that is why truths that have multiple dimensions always escape human thought and reason. This is similar to the conceptualisation of an elephant by blind persons.

Further, all our five senses are designed to function in order that the relative differences in stimuli can be perceived. An absolute homogeneous, changeless entity cannot be perceived by our senses. If such a perception were possible, time, being the index of change, would cease to exist in our perception. So, the human being is incapable of perceiving the timeless, changeless, homogeneous absolute ones.

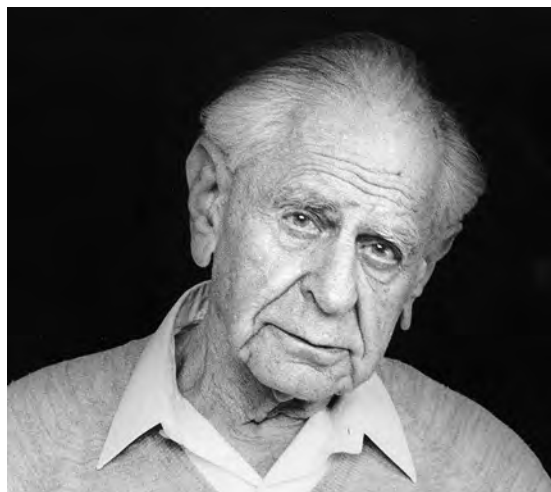
It is therefore impossible to have an objective perception of changeless objects. Therefore, it is impossible to perceive the eternal and changeless Brahman through the senses. Hence, if one could isolate the senses from relative perception and if thoughts could be removed from the mind, one can perceive the true reality.

### ***Influences on Our Intellect***

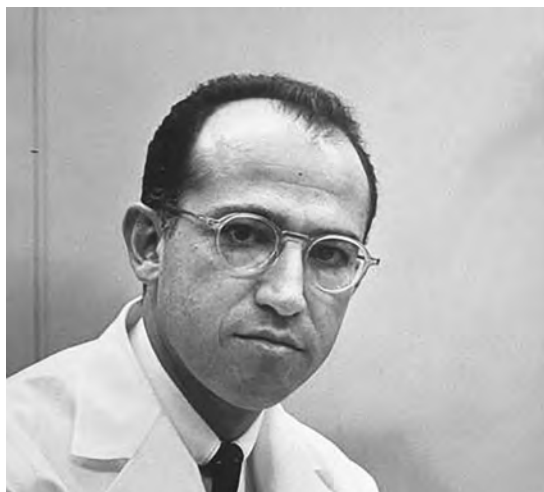
The intellect is a weak instrument of knowledge as it has to work with the limitations of sense organs, though it is an important tool for living in the marketplace of the world. The ordinary intellect usually works on the surface and is unable to penetrate deep into matter. Patricia Churchland, a renowned neurophilosopher says: 'Brains are not magical; they are causal machines.'<sup>9</sup> So unless the heart is developed, one cannot live a balanced and fruitful life. The root cause of most of our problems is a lack of emotional management, a lack of understanding, care, respect, and compassion.

Most organisations and institutions face the problems of malfunctioning such as conflicts and misunderstanding because their leaders lack the skills to manage themselves emotionally, arising from the immaturity of the heart. 'In a high-IQ job pool, soft skills like discipline, drive and empathy mark those who emerge as outstanding', says Daniel Goleman.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, as said by Aldous Huxley, 'It is man's intelligence that makes him so often behave more stupidly than the beasts. ... Man is so intelligent that he





Karl Raimund Popper



Dr Jonas Salk

feels impelled to invent theories to account for what happens in the world. Unfortunately, he is not quite intelligent enough, in most cases, to find correct explanations.<sup>11</sup> Swamiji pointed out: 'Intellect ends where religion begins.'<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the intellect needs a proper container with high storage capacity, along with proper assimilation; otherwise one would not get the desired results.

### **Intellect and Intuition**

Karl Raimund Popper (1902–94) says in his book *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*: 'There is no such thing as a logical method of having new ideas, or a logical reconstruction of this process. My view may be expressed by saying that every discovery contains "an irrational element", or "a creative intuition", in Bergson's sense.'<sup>13</sup> 'Science does not rest upon solid bedrock. ... We simply stop when we are satisfied ... for the time being' (94). Albert Einstein said: 'The mind can proceed only so far upon what it knows and can prove. There comes a point where the mind takes a leap—call it intuition or what you will—and comes out upon a higher plane of knowledge, but can never prove how it got there. All great discoveries have involved such a leap.'<sup>14</sup>

It would be relevant to mention some intuitive discoveries. Jonas Salk (1914–95), the inventor of polio vaccine, kept intuition as his 'clinical assistant' and used to say: 'It's always with excitement that I wake up in the morning wondering what my intuition will toss up to me like gifts from the sea.'<sup>15</sup> While visiting the baths, Archimedes suddenly awoke to a significant principle of buoyancy that would enable him to measure the volume of an object based upon the amount of water it displaced. Frederick August Kekulé (1829–96) discovered the tetravalent nature of carbon, the formation of chemical or organic 'Structure Theory', but he did not make this breakthrough by experiment alone. He had a dream of a snake coiled and biting its tail. Dmitri Mendeleev's (1834–1907) periodic table is one of the best examples of synthesis in science, an idea that brought about the ability to make predictions about the discovery of new elements. What is less known is that Mendeleev had the idea in a dream and not while he was sitting at his desk thinking about the order of the universe.

### **Interference with our Inbuilt Samskaras**

A person is a tool in the hands of the mass of one's accumulated tendencies or samskaras. The



Dmitri Mendeleev

quality and range of our thought, speech, and action are determined by the kind of samskaras, being the so-called hidden forces. Animals do not have any choice as they are guided by their instinct. According

to the Gita, 'the doer or agent of action who is free from attachment, non-egotistic, endowed with fortitude and enthusiasm, and unaffected in success or failure is said to be *sattvika*.'<sup>16</sup> Such a person alone can take an unbiased decision with respect to the work undertaken.

Only those who are selfless and free from the ideas of doership and enjoyership are not bound. Swamiji said: 'We only deserve things when they have ceased to bind us. When all bondages ceases, really and truly, all things come to us. Only those who want nothing are masters of nature.'<sup>17</sup>

What we know to be our mind is only its luminous and conscious part. There are millions of our sunken thoughts remaining submerged as the dark, unconscious mind influencing our body, mind, and personality. These tendencies are stored up in the unconscious part of our mind, which lead to automatic behaviour over which we have no control. The prodding of good and evil that one feels in the present is the momentum of one's own thoughts nurtured in the past. Both good and bad tendencies are present in each of us. It is only the proportions that vary from person to person. They may be latent in us, but are likely to come up under stimulus from favourable circumstances.

The good and bad tendencies remaining in

one's subconscious mental plane might overcome one anytime and put one on the pre-created track. The dominant tendencies unfold as actions over time. According to the Gita, one is driven towards the goal in spite of oneself, by the force of one's previous striving or practice.<sup>18</sup> If that is so, it makes sense to create good samskaras rather than bad ones. By one's intense self-effort, one can build one's good personality, no matter what one inherits from the past. But bad samskaras already created cannot be easily destroyed. At least we should not give them an opportunity to wake up. If we keep them inactive persistently for a considerable period of time, it would be difficult for them to rise again.

Our inborn samskaras markedly influence the development of our intellect. This samskara is deeply inbuilt in us. This is evident from Duryodhana's statement when Sri Krishna came to persuade him to abstain from fighting the Kurukshetra War: 'I know what dharma is, but I am unable to perform it; I know what adharma is, but I am unable to abstain from it; it seems as if some god sitting in my heart propels me to do all actions.'<sup>19</sup>

This means that in spite of clearly knowing the pros and cons of a particular action, we are often overwhelmed by our inbuilt prejudices and tendencies. The Gita says: 'Even a wise person acts in accordance with one's own nature; beings follow nature; what can restraint do?'<sup>20</sup> Hence the primary task of a spiritual seeker is to create good samskaras and get rid of the bad samskaras. Further, the Gita says: 'Objects fall away from the abstinent person, leaving the longing behind. But this longing also ceases for one who sees the supreme' (2.59). Only those having a strong power of discernment can avoid temptation and thereby overcome samskaras.

### **Intellect and Environment:**

#### **Nature and Nurture**

When the human genome was discovered towards the end of the last century, it was thought that the inbuilt genes carry all the tendencies that are unchangeable. But it has since been revealed that the inborn characteristics are not the last word. It is subject to change in the environment where one is living. Biology is about nature, while culture is about nurture. Evolutionary biology can explain the genetically determined behaviour but not the behaviour that is learnt or is the result of contact with the environment. Different traits of genes do vary in how sensitive they are to environmental differences. Differences in environment can cause genetically identical individuals to behave differently. The environment produces adaptive behaviour. Therefore, one should have a combination of nature and nurture. Inheritance and learning are combined in a way that cannot be passed into genes or environment.

#### **Intellect and Illusion**

Vedanta asserts that Brahman is truth, being the Reality, while the manifested universe, *jagat*, is mithya or illusion. It says that the universe is only *vyavaharic* or relative truth, while the *paramarthic* or the supreme eternal truth is only the Brahman. It is the power of maya, *avarana* shakti, that creates such an illusion and as a result, the reality of things is hidden. Then, we are diverted from the Reality by the power of *vikshepa* shakti. This *avarana* is the creation of our inherent *tamasic* nature, while *vikshepa* is our *rajasic* quality.

The universe as such is an objective reality. But its perception is subjective. Therefore, it is obvious that its perception would be different for different persons depending upon one's competency, that is the level of one's attachment to

the body-mind complex. The same universe appears variously to different people. This changeable universe cannot be real. The world is ever changing in time and space. How can a changeable thing be regarded as truth?

This illusion does not leave anyone, even the very wise, discerning person. In the *Chandi*, which is a part of the *Markandeya Purana*, it is said that the Mahamaya forcibly distracts even the wise from the truth.<sup>21</sup>

#### **Supremacy in Discernment**

Every perception involves an object that is perceived and a subject who perceives. The objects and the forms of perception change, while the perceiver is unchangeable. We say we have a body, mind, and sense faculties of perception—they are all objects perceived by a subject. The subject objectifies the body, sense, mind, and feelings as well. The feelings are nothing but objects in relation to the subject. There is a subject who is the perceiver of all these but does not take part in any of these expressions. The feeling of pleasure, pain, or anger belongs to the object.

Change happens only in the object, the body-mind complex. The subject does not change. The characteristic of the seer is unchangeability. I am separate and distinct from all these. The mind is also an object since it undergoes changes according to desire, feeling, determination, faith, steadfastness, and so on. But unless the mind is attached to objects, there cannot be any perception. That which is constant and changeless is the perceiver.

This is aptly illustrated in *Drig-drishya-viveka*, the discernment of the seer and the seen. The topic deals with the discernment between *drik*, the observer, the experiencer, seer, illuminator, or subject, and the *drishya*, the observed, the experienced, seen, illuminated, or object. There is non-discernment, mixing-up of the seer-seen,

which is the cause of all problems that seriously affect our life. One is required to resolve the problem for ultimate success in life or moksha for spiritual aspirants.

The first verse of the treatise *Drig-drishya-viveka* goes as follows: '*Rupam drishyam lochanam drik taddrishyam drik-tu manasam, drishya dhi-vrittayah sakshi drigeva na tu drishyate*; the form is perceived and the eye is its perceiver. The eye is perceived and the mind is its perceiver. The mind with its modifications is perceived and the Witness, the Self, is indeed the perceiver. But the Witness is not perceived by any other.'<sup>22</sup>

There are three levels of discernment:

Level 1: The sense organs and the sense objects.

Level 2: The mind and the sense organs.

Level 3: The witness Self and the mind.

And finally the qualities of the *sakshi*, the witness Self, are discussed.

The eyes see and the world of forms are seen. Eyes cannot see the eyes themselves. The seer is one, while the seen are many and different. The seer is relatively unchanging, the seen keeps on changing. In the second stage, the mind becomes the seer, eyes become the seen. In the third stage, the mind itself is the seen. There are many thoughts, feelings, emotions, and ideas in the mind. There is a continuous stream of movements in the mind but the knower of the mind is the same. There is a seer of mind called the Witness, which is unchanging.

This may be understood with the following example. If you feel your misery, then you cannot be miserable. You are the knower of the misery of the mind, because the knower and the known are different. Misery is a feeling in the mind. Similarly, you are the knower of the happiness of the mind. You are eternally undisturbed regardless of the states of the mind or the status of

the world. Reference may be made to Swamiji's statement: 'Mind is an instrument in the hand of Atman just as body is an instrument in the hand of mind.'<sup>23</sup>

The Gita illustrates this by saying: 'One who is free from the notion of egoism, whose intelligence is not affected by good or evil, though one kills these people, one kills not, nor is one bound by the action.'<sup>24</sup> Such a person realises the real witness Self in the form of pure consciousness. The problem is that we are strongly attached to the mind and through the mind to the world. Whatever is there in the mind, you are the witness of the mind, and the witness is ever separate from the mind.

This discernment should be cultivated step by step, from the body to the sense-organs and to the mind, by gradual development of a new set of values that *drig-drishya-viveka* signifies. The transformation is from objective to subjective, outer to inner, and ultimately to the completely unattached but fully knowledgeable witness Self. We have to learn to get out of that, which we cannot hold on to. Harder we hold on to the world, body, or mind, the more is our bondage and suffering. That is why we feel trapped.

The world, the physical body, the sense organs, and the mind are made of insentient elements. When these inert objects function as sentient elements, there must be a borrowing of consciousness from somewhere else. Just like a fan does not have the capacity of rotation by itself but rotates by borrowing invisible power from the electricity. In the same way, our insentient body, sense organs, and mind are blessed by the consciousness of the real Self behind.

### **Adhikari and the Power of Being Selfless**

A human being has the freedom to perform certain actions according to one's competency, but



one usually follows the way as per one's temperament. Swamiji said: 'We are heirs to all the good and bad thoughts of the universe, if we open ourselves to them.'<sup>25</sup> He said on other occasions: 'If we make ourselves pure and the instruments of good thoughts, these will enter us. The good soul will not be receptive to evil thoughts. Evil thoughts find the best field in evil people; they are like microbes which germinate and increase only when they find a suitable soil' (6.134). 'There are hundreds of thousands of microbes surrounding us, but they cannot harm us unless we become weak, until the body is ready and predisposed to receive them. There may be a million microbes of misery floating about us. Never mind! They dare not approach us, they have no power to get a hold on us, until the mind is weakened' (2.3).

The essential qualification of a spiritual aspirant for becoming an *adhikari*, qualified, for spiritual life is to be strongly disinterested in the fruits of all activity in this world or beyond. Acharya Shankara in his *Vivekachudamani* identifies three kinds of fruits of actions: Anything that upgrades name and fame, anything that brings happiness of the body, and undue emphasis on scriptural studies.<sup>26</sup> One is required to avoid all these three.

That's why spiritual teachers demand *chitta-shuddhi*, the purification of the mind from the objective and the subjective, being material taints and inbuilt attachments. By purity and unselfishness, one can make the obscuring medium less and less dense until as clean as glass. The more one handles materialistic transactions the more impurity as material taint would be induced. The mind, full of desire, is distracted and fluctuates from the Reality, but when it is fully freed of distractions, it becomes a powerful tool for discernment. When desires vanish and there is no bondage, people truly

enjoy the world. King Bhartrihari describes the qualities of a *viveki*, a person adept in discernment of the Real from the unreal: 'The steadfast ones do not deviate from the righteous path even if they are praised or insulted by ethicists, even if the goddess of wealth comes and goes according to her sweet will, and even if their death is impending today itself or after an aeon.'<sup>27</sup>

But it is only through the purity of mind, that is, by removing all attachments and prejudices, that one can get the knowledge of Reality. It is only ethical to follow those who have attained this knowledge. The *Katha Upanishad* says that the 'Atman reveals itself only to the spiritual aspirant who selflessly prays to Atman.'<sup>28</sup> It reveals itself only to the wise, the one who is prepared with appropriate strength.

The law of electromagnetic induction applies to similar class of materials, magnetic or dielectric as the case may be, not to dissimilar materials. Induction will not grow up there if a non-magnetic material be brought near a magnet. To increase the effect of attraction, one should be nearer and also the medium should be conducive and the effect will automatically be induced, if it be pure. Once you have attained that quality the result is bound to come. Similarly, when all mental resistances cease, one's personality becomes a fit vehicle for the transmission of perfection. In this way, our ancestor-rishis saw this world in meditation to be devoid of worldly turbulations.

## Conclusion

*Viveka* is neither wisdom nor intellectual jargon but a state of mind without illusion. It is not prejudiced. However, it is not the state of self-realisation. To achieve this, one has to make the mind devoid of materialistic impurity. The purpose of self-purification is to release one's higher

nature from the thralldom of the lower self. The Gita says that when a person loses one's discerning faculty, one is 'destroyed'.<sup>29</sup> The implication of this verse is that a human being can be called so only as long as one's mind is able to discern the right from the wrong. When this discerning faculty is lost, one ceases to be a human being. Sri Ramakrishna said: 'An ordinary jiva is called *manush*, human being. Only one who has realised one's true nature is a *man-hunsh*. [That is, only such a person is conscious of one's dignified nature.] That is why you are a *man-hunsh* [true human being].'<sup>30</sup>

The Vedanta literature says that we pay more attention to the cleaning of the external surroundings without paying any heed to the cleaning of our internal selves. It is important to remove our internal impurities like desires. Swamiji said: 'Does seeing depend upon our own efforts or does it depend upon something outside? It depends upon ourselves; our efforts take off the dust, the mirror does not change.'<sup>31</sup>

Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutra* directs one to the route of self-realisation through his ashtanga yoga. This path firmly declares that establishment in the virtues of *yama* and *niyama*, being the preliminary disciplines, is essential for the absolute control of the mind. Intellectually, we take a self-centred view of the world, since such a view works well with the limited sense organs. However, on the spiritual plane, we ought to take a holistic or God-centred view, and strive for the effacement of the individual self. We need to become a partner in the business of God, not try to make God a partner in the business of ego.



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# YOUNG EYES

## *India's Biggest Problem: Anger*

**Aruansh Khare**

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EVERY NATION has its own share of problems and challenges. India is no exception. Generally, Indians feel that the problems that are upsetting the nation are poverty, unemployment, population, and so on. While these problems are very much real and challenging, there is a deeper issue that is at the core of all these and other problems that India is facing. I want to discuss that deeper issue here. I believe that it is because of an individual and collective anger that India and the rest of the world are facing most of their problems. First, let us see how this anger is born.

Anger is born in an individual because of the lack of inner peace. Inner peace is lost when a person does not find things happening according to one's wishes. One may wish to have a big house, a big car, and so on. But, it is not possible that one would get all these things. Also, a person might not get the kind of behaviour from the others that one expects. Then, a person gets angry. Naturally, this anger is expressed completely where the others would hear the person or where the others would be more sympathetic to that person. So, even if a person is angry that person would not express it to one's boss but would pour out all that anger to one's family at home.

Since we have now understood the origin of anger, it would become clear to us that the root of anger lies in the person who is angry. One

gets angry because one wants the entire world to be according to one's wishes. But, is that a desirable thing? Of course not. If the entire world were like one person's wishes, it would not be a good place to live in. Also, it would go against the wishes of the other people in this world. So, anger comes because of not being able to accommodate diverse ways of thinking. It comes because of a unidirectional way of thinking.

Let us take an example from school. Suppose, the time or period meant for playing games is cancelled because of some reason, then the students get agitated, start shouting, and create a ruckus. Why do they do so? Because they think that playing a game is an important way to get happiness. Now, this anger starts with one student and then infects all the other students like a chain reaction. Even an otherwise calm and peaceful student would get agitated in such an environment. So, anger not only creates disturbance in the minds of the people who are angry, but also poisons the others and makes a particular way of thinking as the prominent one for discussion. Thus, anger causes a chain reaction. When one gets angry, that person should just expel anger out of their minds. They should only express peace and peaceful thoughts. Anger has no place in our minds.

The parents are nowadays neglecting their children and imposing narrow ways of thinking



on them. They should understand that children need their guidance to become their equals or to become adults. Diverse ways of thinking should be encouraged from childhood. In reality, everyone, every being, and everything is equal. We need to pray as much as possible and be sensitive to our environment. Here, by environment, I mean both the

geographical or natural environment and the emotional, mental, or ideological environment. All this can be achieved by the regular practice of meditation.

Meditation should be taught to every child from a very young age. The period of a person from one's birth to six years is the most crucial period. This is when the pace of growth is the maximum and this is when they should be taught all the life skills. After some time, human growth becomes limited. However, these days, parents do not seem to be focussing on this aspect of the lives of their children.


For example, when a child, even a baby, cries, the parents immediately hand over to the baby a smartphone or a tablet, or a similar handheld device for shutting up the baby. However, exposure to such electronic devices at such a young age harms a baby's physical and psychological health. However, please do not misunderstand me. I am not against technology. I am only saying that we should use technology wisely and in a limited manner. Whenever one talks of the demerits of technology, one says that technology is completely bad. And ironically, this is told by people, who earn their incomes by using such technology. See around

us! All of us are using technology all the time. Then, how can we blame technology? It is not the fault of technology that we are unable to use it properly or that we are unable to use it with some restraint.

The upbringing at home is crucial in managing anger and having a proper understanding of the world. How are religious fundamentalists and terrorists created? Mostly, they are created because of a lack of proper upbringing. The anger against their parents, anger for not having received love and care, remains in a person and it increases, develops, and finally finds a way to explode, sometimes literally, in the form of a bomb!

An angry person has a one-pointed, unidirectional mind. When such a mind gets involved in bad and evil activities, that could bring disaster. When one finds stress accumulating in oneself because of anger, that person explodes. An angry person usually has a black and white understanding of things. Such a person does not want to understand other people.

The best method to deal with angry people is to ignore them. Ignoring all bad, evil, and angry people can bring us much peace. We should do so because angry people want to infect everyone with anger. They want everyone to be a part of some quarrel or fight. We should learn to not discriminate any one. Discrimination comes because of not having peace inside oneself. Then, we discriminate people based on religion, language, style, intelligence, and so on. We should thus learn to meditate and calm our minds and not be angry.

India is a great country and I am proud to be an Indian. And that is why, I want that all Indians should tackle their anger and not let it come out of their minds, and not let it be expressed in words or actions. I hope and pray that all Indians would listen to my prayer. 



# BALABODHA

*Ancient Wisdom Made Easy*

## Murti

THE WORD *murti* is a commonly used Sanskrit word. It is used by people, who do not even know Sanskrit, as it is present in almost every Indian language. The widely used meaning of the word *murti* is an image or an idol. However, it is necessary to see the other meanings and the origins of this Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word *murti* is derived by adding the suffix *ktin* to the root *murchchh*, and the gender is feminine. *Murchchh* means to become solid, thicken, congeal, assume shape or substance or consistency, expand, increase, grow, become or be vehement or intense or strong, to fill, pervade, penetrate, spread over, to have power or take effect upon, to grow stiff or rigid, faint, swoon, become senseless or stupid or unconscious, to deafen, or to cause to sound aloud. The word *murti* means anything that has a definite shape and limits; material element; matter; substance; a form; visible shape; body; figure; an embodiment; incarnation; personification; manifestation; an image; idol; a statue; beauty; solidity; hardness; a limb of the body; the mind and the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water; embodiment; manifestation; incarnation; personification; a person; an appearance; the name of the first astrological house; the name of a daughter of Daksha; the name of the wife of Dharma; the name of a rishi under the tenth Manu, the name of a son of Vasishtha, or the name of a Prajapati of the

Svarochisha epoch. *Murti* is the name of one of the thirteen daughters of Daksha Prajapati, who was married to Dharma. Nara and Narayana are the sons of Murti and Dharma.

The word 'idol' cannot be considered the proper translation of the Sanskrit word *murti*, for the simple reason that 'idol' has many connotations in English, most of which are derogatory. On the other hand, *murti* is generally considered to be the embodied representation of the Divine principle. Such a representation could take any form, most of which are human. However, it is not uncommon to see many animal forms or the forms of other living beings as representing some divine power. The iconography in the different forms of *murti* is interesting as most of these forms are visual developments of the bodies that we find naturally. For instance, it is quite common to see a *murti* with a human form having multiple arms or heads. These represent the supra-normal powers of the divine beings.

A *murti* does not merely represent a symbol of the Divine, but the *murti* itself is made divine by invoking the power of the Divine by a ritual called *prana-pratishtha* or the invoking of life. Sri Ramakrishna tested the *murti* of Kali at the temple in Dakshineswar to see if it was a living *murti*, and found to his great relief, that the *murti* was indeed breathing! Thus, a *murti* in the traditional Indian sense cannot be considered as a mere symbol, icon, image, or idol, but has to be seen only as a living manifestation of the Divine.

PB

# TRADITIONAL TALES

## *Sri Krishna's Explanation*

### **Radha's Heart**

ONCE, SRI KRISHNA with his retinue including his family, went for bathing in the river in the place called Siddhashrama. As luck would have it, at that time, Radha had also gone there with her female friends or *sakhis*. Both the parties were overjoyed at seeing one another and started talking amongst themselves. Sri Krishna's anointed queens were hearing Sri Krishna tell about Radha's glories. Hence, they met Radha privately in an opportune moment. Radha heartily welcomed them and attended on them. During her conversation she

told the following verse: '*Chandro yathaiko bahavah chakorah, suryo yathaiko bahavo drishahsyuh, Srikrishna-chandro bhagavan tathaiva, bhakta bhaginyo bahavo vayam cha*; just as there is only one moon but many partridges that feed on the moonbeam, just as there is only one sun but many eyes, similarly there is only one moon-faced Lord Sri Krishna but there are many of us devotee-sisters.'

The queens were quite surprised hearing these words of Radha. They coaxed her to go to their residence. There, Radha was given a grand welcome and a royal treatment. She was

*'Krishna, Radha, and Gopis', Indian Painting in Gouache, Eighteenth Century, Detroit Institute of Arts*



fed sumptuously. Finally, Queen Rukmini herself offered milk to Radha and persuaded her to drink it. After that, conversing a while on various wonderful topics of interest, Radha returned to her home. Night fell. All retired to bed. As was her daily practice, Rukmini sat at Sri Krishna's feet to massage his legs. She was shocked to see the soles of Sri Krishna's feet. They were full of blisters! Petrified, Rukmini called her *sakhis* and described to them what she had seen. They came and saw the blisters and were dumbfounded. How to ask Sri Krishna about the cause of the blisters? No one could gather the courage.

Finally, when Sri Krishna opened his eyes, he asked the reason why Rukmini's *sakhis* had huddled up there. In reply, they pointed towards the blisters. Initially, Sri Krishna tried to brush aside the topic. However, the *sakhis* did not give up. When they strongly insisted on knowing the cause of the blisters, Sri Krishna said: 'My feet always dwell, day and night, in Radha's heart. You gave her very hot milk. Radha drank it because you had given it. The milk went inside her body and up to her heart. Thus, my feet could not bear the heat and there appeared blisters. It is but natural.'

The queens were silenced on hearing the Lord's words. Since then, they understood that in front of the Himalayan love of Radha, their love was a mere speck of dust. This story describing Radha's glory is found in the *Jataka Samhita*.

### **Yashoda's Greatness**

Unable to handle the mischief of the child Sri Krishna, Yashoda came to a conclusion after much thought. She tied a rope to a wooden mortar. Then, she tried to tie the other end of the rope to the waist of the child Sri Krishna. But, the rope fell short. She brought another rope, tied it to the first rope and tried again to tie Sri Krishna. The rope was short even then. In this manner, no matter how much rope Yashoda



*The Pillared Hall, Baby Sri Krishna's House, Gokul, Mathura*

brought and no matter how long the combined rope was, it fell short and she could not tie Sri Krishna. Further, it was a great ordeal to manage the child Sri Krishna, who was running away.

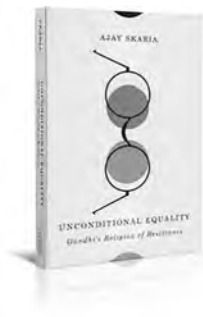
The gods and devotees had arrived there to see this amazing phenomenon. Of them a person asked Sri Krishna: 'You, who is the supreme Brahman, have now taken the form of a child. Still, you are enacting your divine play. Your mother Yashoda is trying to tie you and no matter however much rope she brings; it is all falling short. At the same time, she is exasperated in trying to manage you. These divine plays of yours are completely unrelated to your present form of a child! What kind of completely inappropriate play is this?'

Sri Krishna replied: 'You too do not believe me! How can I ever exasperate Yashoda? Why are you blaming me without any reason?' Hearing this reply, the devotee prayed: 'Sri Krishna! I do not want to hurt you or make you, who is in the form of a child, cry. But, what is the purport of this play of yours? Please tell that.'

This was Sri Krishna's explanation to the devotee's question: 'The reason that the rope is falling short is the greatness of Yashoda's hands. When the omnipresent Brahman, existing everywhere, has become a child in her hands, what is there to wonder at the rope falling short?'

# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



## **Unconditional Equality: Gandhi's Religion of Resistance**

Ajay Skaria

University of Minnesota Press, 111  
Third Avenue South, Suite 290,  
Minneapolis, MN 55401 2520, USA.  
Website: <http://www.upress.umn.edu>.  
2016. xvi + 392 pp. \$30. PB. ISBN  
9780816698660.

When the world is celebrating the 150 years of Mahatma Gandhi's birth, it is only opportune to look at the book under review, which though published some years ago, attempts to understand his path of political resistance, satyagraha. Gandhi's ideas on politics and economics have been debated and contested for more than a century.

This book is an outcome of a deep study of Gandhi's writings by Ajay Skaria, a scholar of South Asian politics and history, presently teaching at the University of Minnesota. It is an attempt to understand Gandhi's philosophy of politics, religion, and life in general, beginning with his neologism 'satyagraha'. This word was coined initially as a translation of 'passive resistance', but it slowly took on the idea of 'religion' or 'dharma' and finally as the essence of every religion or 'the religion that stays in all religions' (vii). The word *satya* stands for 'truth in the sense of the realisation or accomplishment of being' and *agraha* implies 'force, firmness, insistence, or even seizing'. Skaria further clarifies: 'It is not as though the satyagrahi, the practitioner of satyagraha, already knows or possesses satya and seeks only to enforce or spread it; rather, the satyagrahi is engaged in a "quest for satya"' (ix).

Skaria argues that it is extremely difficult to understand Gandhi's religion of satyagraha from the standpoint of theological secularism. Apart from this, as Skaria points out, the transition of

Gandhi's satyagraha from religion to universal love and absolute equality is not merely based on faith in God and also does not demand any specific political or institutional form. Skaria finds parallels of Gandhi's insistence on the necessity of the 'surrender of sovereignty' to attain religious experiences with St Augustine's humility at the inability of finding 'grounds for' oneself (xii).

Skaria states that essential 'to Gandhi's equality of the minor is what could be called surrender without subordination' (9). Quoting from Gandhi's book *Hind Swaraj* or *Indian Home Rule* where he says that 'every lover of India' should 'keep faith' and 'cling to Indian civility even as a child clings to the mother', Skaria explains the concept of satyagraha.

Gandhi affirms *aparigraha* or 'non-possession' as another important quality necessary for the practice of satyagraha, because while practising equality 'I can only possess certain things when I know that others, who also want to possess similar things, are able to do so' (13). This in its highest form is complete self-sacrifice—the non-possession of one's own life. It is an act of 'willing surrender' endowed with compassion and love.

Skaria explains how, in Gandhi's opinion, a satyagrahi excels over the arms-bearing warrior. The gift of fearlessness or *abhaydan* is the 'greatest of gifts', according to Gandhi, and is 'the first requisite of true religion' (22).

When Gandhi became a national figure and satyagraha a national movement, it became increasingly difficult for all the people who participated in the freedom struggle to imbibe the ideal fully and consistently. On 5 February 1922, a group of protesters in Chauri Chaura, Gorakhpur, participating in the Non-cooperation Movement started by Gandhi, clashed with the local police and set fire to a police station killing its occupants. Gandhi, being firm on non-violence, was forced to withdraw the movement and said: 'I know



the only thing that the government fears is this monstrous majority that I appear to command. They do not know that I fear it still more than they do themselves.' Here Skaria comments that 'even satyagraha becomes monstrous when it generates fear as a response rather than surrender without subordination' (81).

Some important observations of Gandhi have been highlighted and critiqued by Skaria. Writing about Swaraj, independence or freedom, Gandhi remarks: 'Swaraj is the abandonment of the fear of death.' The 'spirit of fearlessness' is 'the first thing indispensable before we could achieve anything permanent and real' (92). This spirit can be cultivated only by self-sacrifice, suffering for a great cause or for a common good, as propounded by satyagraha: 'Pure sacrifice is the religion that stays in all religions, it is "one's own religion"' (93).

In the chapter 'The Warrior's Sovereign Gift', Skaria discusses in detail the concepts of an ideal warrior as given in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and compares them with Gandhi's ideas. Also, the idea of ahimsa as propounded by Lala Lajpat Rai, in contrast with that of Gandhi, is discussed in detail. It is interesting to note how Gandhi admires Hitler for his single-mindedness.

Even though deeply involved in politics, Gandhi was essentially a spiritual aspirant and his ideas strongly mirror the traditional ideas of Hindu spiritual life. Regarding brahmacharya or celibacy, Gandhi asserts 'how indispensable it was to self-realization' and describes it as 'the royal road to self-realization or attainment of Brahman [God]' (99). His sincere approach based on both faith and rationality, made him conclude that 'Truth is God, or God is nothing but Truth. We come across this idea in every religion' (175). Skaria comments that this idea 'shifts the infinite and grounding sovereignty from God to being' (ibid.).

In answer to the question that in the Bhagavadgita, Sri Krishna commands Arjuna to kill the enemy that might appear contradictory to the practice of ahimsa, Gandhi suggests that the Gita is concerned with the 'universally acknowledged spiritual war' between the 'good and evil', and hence to confuse Arjuna's war 'with a momentary world strife is to call holy unholy' (192). Skaria then goes on to analyse Gandhi's thoughts

on the various ideas propounded in the Gita.

Skaria attempts to wade his way through numerous concepts of the Hindu world view and it is only understandable that this might cause some loose ends to remain. For instance, while discussing Gandhi's understanding of the message of the Upanishads, Skaria cites Gandhi: 'The final word of the *Upanishads* (*Brahmavidya*) is Not' (181). However, as any traditional scholar or practitioner of Advaita Vedanta would vouch, that is anything but the case. The final word of the Upanishads is not 'Not' but 'Is'. Brahman is the only Reality. The purport of the Upanishads is to bring in the knowledge of the identity of Brahman and Atman. Thus, Skaria errs when he says: 'This insistence on not-ness is taken up in the Advaitic systematization associated with Adi Shankaracharya' (ibid.). Acharya Shankara aimed only at teaching the purport of the Upanishads.

A satyagrahi takes the vows of swadeshi and ahimsa. Gandhi defines a vow: 'If we resolved to do a thing, and are ready even to sacrifice our lives in the process, we are said to have taken a vow' (223). And to practise such vows, one has to give up attachment to the world and various relationships that may take one away from the Truth. Gandhi declares that it is 'necessary to preserve only one friendship, namely, God's' (224).

Gandhi describes ahimsa as 'the extreme limit of forgiveness', but also states that 'forgiveness is the quality of the brave' (259). Whether it is the relation between Indians and British, or Hindus and Muslims, or upper castes and lower castes, Gandhi remarked: 'I want, at the end of it, to see established not mutual distrust and the law of force, but mutual trust and the law of love' (260). Love is a manifestation of God and by the practise of ahimsa, a satyagrahi strives to enforce love in all. 'The miracle of satyagraha is the love that arrives without announcement, and conversely the reciprocation that arrives without the slightest expectation' (297).

Skaria traces the evolution of Gandhi's ideas through the massive corpus of his writings and speeches, and gives a fine blend of his philosophy. He compares some of the translations of Gandhi's writings with the Gujarati original, pointing out the differences and provides a better translation in various instances. Skaria has given elaborate

notes and references of the major ideas presented in each chapter. This book is a milestone in the research of the phenomena that transformed Mohandas into a Mahatma.

Swami Shantachittananda  
Associate Editor, *Prabuddha Bharata*

### **'Looking Within': Life Lessons from Lal Ded**

Trans. and Ed. Shonaleeka Kaul  
Aleph Book Company, 7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110001. Website: <http://www.alephbookcompany.com>. 2019. x + 124 pp. ₹399. HB. ISBN 9789388292702.



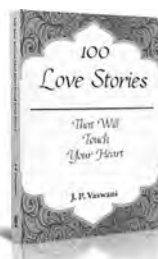
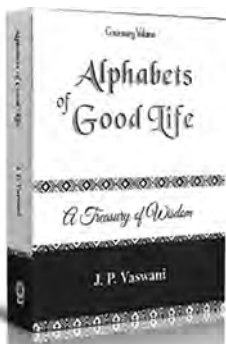
Kashmir weaves a rich tapestry of geographical, cultural, and spiritual heritage. Kashmir Shaivism is the crowning jewel of this spiritual tradition, of which Lal Ded is a brilliant gem, being one of the earliest women gurus of the valley. Shonaleeka Kaul translates 101 teachings of Ded and arranges them in the four chapters of 'Life of Illusions', 'The Search', 'The Realization', and 'The Way', mirroring the steps of understanding the illusoriness of this universe, searching for the non-illusory Truth, realising it, and showing the way to other spiritual aspirants. This book is daily spiritual reading.

Swami Narasimhananda  
Editor, *Prabuddha Bharata*

## **BOOKS RECEIVED**

### **Alphabets of Good Life: A Treasury of Wisdom**

J P Vaswani, Ed. Dr Prabha Sampath and Krishna Kumari  
Gita Publishing House, Sadhu Vaswani Mission, 10, Sadhu Vaswani Path, Pune 411001. Website: <http://www.dadavaswanibooks.com>. 2018. 524 pp. ₹600. PB. ISBN 9789386004093.



### **100 Love Stories: That Will Touch Your Heart**

J P Vaswani, Comp. Dr Prabha Sampath and Krishna Kumari  
Gita Publishing House. 2019. 336 pp. ₹300. PB. ISBN 9789386004062.



### **What Then?**

J P Vaswani  
Gita Publishing House. 2016. 200 pp. ₹150. PB. ISBN 9789380743950.



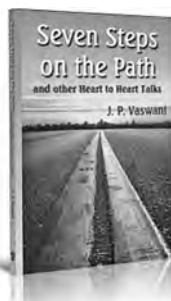
### **A Love: That is Love Indeed**

J P Vaswani  
Gita Publishing House. 2015. vi+146 pp. ₹99. PB. ISBN 9789380743936.



### **Switch On The Light**

J P Vaswani  
Gita Publishing House. 2016. x+150 pp. ₹99. PB. ISBN 9789380743974.



### **Seven Steps on the Path: And Other Heart to Heart Talks**

J P Vaswani  
Gita Publishing House. 2015. 120 pp. ₹150. PB. ISBN 9789380743929.



### **Make the Right Choice**

J P Vaswani  
Pan Macmillan Publishing India Private Limited, 707, Kailash Building, 26 K G Marg, New Delhi 110001. 2019. xii + 136 pp. ₹250. PB. ISBN 9789386215703.

# MANANA

**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.  
Extracts from a thought-provoking book every month.**

## **Worlds without End: The Many Lives of the Multiverse**

Mary-Jane Rubenstein

Columbia University Press, 61 West, 62 Street, New York, NY 10023, USA. Website: <https://cup.columbia.edu>. 2014. 360 pp. \$28.95. HB. ISBN 9780231156622.



ALTHOUGH THE IDEA OF multiple worlds is hardly a new one, it has been bubbling up with increasing regularity over the past fifteen years. No longer merely the stuff of science fiction, the notion is now under consideration as a scientific hypothesis, with some of the earth's most highly respected physicists and cosmologists suggesting that our whole universe—from our perspective, all that *is*—might be just a negligible part of a vast, perhaps infinite, 'multiverse'. At first, this idea was confined mainly to specialized journals and edited volumes, with the exception of a few crucial issues of *Scientific American*. Then, more or less all at once, the multiverse hit the magazines, the blogosphere, radio shows, televised documentaries, and the popular-science bookshelves—most notably in the form of Brian Greene's latest best-selling monograph, *The Hidden Reality: Parallel Universes and the Deep Laws of the Cosmos*.

This multiversal explosion has in turn led to a renewed proliferation of pop-cultural explorations of hidden dimensions, parallel universes, and copycat cosmoi. At the time of my writing this introduction, for example, a Google news alert set for the term *multiverse* is turning up more links to a forthcoming *Family Guy* video game for PlayStation and Xbox called *Back to the Multiverse* than to scholarly books

or articles—by a factor of five. The game takes its lead from a season 8 episode that aired in September 2009, 'Road to the Multiverse'. Early in the episode, the preternaturally intelligent, British-accented toddler Stewie Griffin asks the family's preternaturally intelligent, upright dog, 'You ever heard of the multiverse theory, Brian?'

'Well, of course I have,' Brian responds haltingly, 'but—I'm wondering if *you* have.'

'Oh my God,' sighs Stewie, 'so transparent. Well, the theory states that there are an infinite number of universes coexistent with ours on parallel dimensional planes.'

'... dimensional planes, right.'

'Oh, don't do that,' Stewie retorts. 'Don't, don't—don't *repeat* the last two words like you already *kind of* knew what I was talking about; you have *no idea* what I'm talking about. Now in each of these alternate universes, the reality is different than our own. Sometimes only slightly, sometimes quite radically. The point is, every possible eventuality *exists*.'

A quick riff on the Many-Worlds Interpretation (MWI) of quantum mechanics, with a few elements from inflationary cosmology, superstring theory, modal realism, and *The Twilight Zone* thrown in, Stewie's explanation is both mystifying and intriguing enough to get Brian hooked. So with the aid of a genre-appropriate

remote-control device, the two characters go traveling through this mash-up multiverse.

Again, this sort of madcap fascination with multiple worlds is neither surprising nor new. What *is* remarkable is that the impetus for this recent bout of popular fascination is coming from the heights and depths of contemporary cosmology and particle physics. What is remarkable, in other words, is that ‘the multiverse’ has suddenly and dramatically become scientifically *thinkable*. And although most physicists, astronomers, and cosmologists still remain highly skeptical of the idea, its proponents include so many scientific luminaries, including Brian Greene, Martin Rees, Alan Guth, and, in his own way, Stephen Hawking, that no one at this point can simply ignore it. Even the physicist and historian of science Helge Kragh, a notorious multiverse skeptic, concedes that among a ‘not insignificant’ number of theoretical physicists, ‘what used to be a philosophical speculation is now claimed to be a new [cosmological] paradigm.’

In order to account for the emergence of the multiverse as what Lorraine Daston would call a ‘scientific object,’ this book looks back to the earliest documented sources on multiple worlds, beginning with the Greek ‘Atomist’ philosophers in the fifth century BCE and then gradually working its way through to the present. The volume’s task is fourfold: first, to give a historical account of the ebbs and flows of multiple-world cosmologies; second, to map contemporary models of the multiverse in relation to their philosophical, mythological, and even theological precedents; third, to ask how, why, and to whom the multiverse has become a particularly attractive hypothesis at this historical juncture; and fourth, to mark multiverse cosmologies as the site of a constructive reconfiguration of the boundaries between ‘science’ and ‘religion.’ Each of these endeavors contributes to

the book’s central philosophical project, which is to find a way to come to terms conceptually with the multiverse. This project is a challenging one because the first question a philosopher tends to ask (What is it?) is in this case remarkably difficult to answer. If, traditionally speaking, ‘the universe’ has meant ‘all that is,’ then what on earth does it mean to posit more than one of them? What is the multiverse?

### ***The One and the Many***

The term *multiverse* seems to have been coined by the psychologist-philosopher William James in 1895. In ‘Is Life Worth Living?’ an address to the Young Men’s Christian Association at Harvard University, James expressed his sense, which he imagined his audience shared, that ‘visible nature is all plasticity and indifference, a *multiverse*, as one might call it, and not a universe.’ James therefore recommends that the young men do everything in their powers to *make* themselves believe—to muster up faith in a ‘truer,’ unseen world that might endow this visible one with an ounce of sense. ‘Believe that life *is* worth living,’ he tells them, ‘and your belief will help create the fact.’ Belief will help unify the disparate and give order to the chaos; belief, in short, will make a universe out of the multiverse.

These days the term *multiverse* has taken on what may or may not be a vastly different meaning, depending on whom you ask. For James, the many things of our one, visible world constitute a ‘multiverse,’ whereas the coherence among those things is the ‘universe.’ For contemporary physicists, by contrast, our one, visible world constitutes the universe (a sphere 40 billion light years in radius also called our ‘Hubble volume’ or ‘observable universe’), whereas the greater ensemble of unseen worlds constitutes the multiverse (sometimes called ‘meta-universe’ or ‘megaverse’).





# REPORTS

## **New Mission Centre**

Ramakrishna Mission, **Shyamsayer**, Bardhaman, which was till now a sub-centre directly under the supervision of the headquarters, has been made a full-fledged branch centre of Ramakrishna Mission. Its address is 'Ramakrishna Mission, Shyamsayer, Bardhaman, West Bengal 713101', phone number: 98304 61857, and email id: <shyamsayer@rkmm.org>.

## **Durga Puja**

Durga Puja was celebrated at Belur Math from 5 to 8 October with due solemnity and joy. Despite some showers, the weather was fine on all four days. Kumari Puja and, after a short interval, Sandhi Puja were performed on 6 October, attended by thousands of devotees. Cooked prasad was served to nearly 67,000 devotees on the Ashtami day and, in total, to about one and a half lakh devotees during the four days.

Durga Puja in the image was celebrated from 5 to 8 October at 28 centres in India, namely Antpur, Asansol, Barasat, Bilaspur, Contai, Cooch Behar, Dhaleswar (under Agartala), Ghatshila, Guwahati, Gwalior, Jalpaiguri, Jamshedpur, Jayrambati, Kailashahar, Kamarpukur, Karimganj, Kasundia (Howrah), Lucknow, Malda, Medinipur, Mumbai, Patna, Port Blair, Rahara, Shella (under Sohra, Cherrapunjee), Shillong, Silchar, and Varanasi Advaita Ashrama, and at Shyamsayer, then a sub-centre of the headquarters.

Sri Nitish Kumar, Chief Minister of Bihar, attended Durga Puja at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Patna**, on 6 October, the Ashtami day.

Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, Finance Minister, Government of Assam, visited **Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Silchar**, on 7 October, the Navami day, and had darshan of the Divine Mother.

Durga Puja in the image was performed at Durban (South Africa) centre, Lusaka (Zambia) centre, Mauritius Ashrama, and 14 centres in Bangladesh, namely Baliati, Barisal, Chandpur, Chittagong, Comilla, Dhaka, Dinajpur, Faridpur, Habiganj, Jessore, Mymensingh, Narayanganj, Rangpur, and Sylhet, and at the Narail sub-centre of Jessore Ashrama.

At **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Dhaka**, Bangladesh, President of Bangladesh, Abdul Hamid; Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina; Inspector General of Police, Javed Patwary; Police Commissioner of Dhaka, Shahidul Islam; Mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation, Sayed Khokan; and several other distinguished persons, and in all, about sixty thousand people attended the Durga Puja celebration.

Sri Tanmaya Lal, High Commissioner of India to Mauritius, attended Durga Puja at **Ramakrishna Mission, Mauritius** on 8 October.

## **News of Branch Centres**

Sri Jagdeep Dhankhar, Governor of West Bengal, visited Ramakrishna Math, Cossipore, on 9 October.

**Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narainpur**, held a sports meet from 12 to 16 October in which 1,500 students from different parts of Chhattisgarh participated. Ms Anusuiya Uikey, Governor of Chhattisgarh, was the chief guest at the closing ceremony of the event.


The University Grants Commission (UGC) has selected **RKMVERI** (Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute), deemed university, and the colleges of teacher education of Coimbatore Mission Vidyalaya and Saradapitha centres as Mentor Institutions for helping other higher education

institutions to improve their quality and achieve NAAC accreditation. These three institutions were selected by virtue of the excellent grade points they had scored in their NAAC assessments. In addition to the above, the Government of Jharkhand has nominated RKMVERI as a Mentor Institute for all the non-accredited higher education institutions in Jharkhand to help them excel in NAAC accreditation.

Swami Vivekananda College of **Ramakrishna Mission, Nadi, Fiji**, celebrated its platinum jubilee from 10 to 13 September through seminars and debate competitions. Also, Vivekananda Technical Centre of the Ashrama held its annual graduation ceremony on 12 September which was graced by Ms Rosy Akbar, Education Minister, Fijian Government.

**Commemoration of the 125th Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's Addresses at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, USA**

The following centres held programmes mentioned against their names: **India: Almora:** Four seminars in Almora, Nainital, and Bhimtal from 28 to 30 September. In all, about 2,000 school and college students, professors, and teachers took part in the seminars. **Belagavi (Belgaum):** A youths' convention on 27 September in which 950 college students took part. **Chandipur:** A youths' convention on 29 September attended by 100 students and teachers. **Coimbatore Mission:** Cultural competitions at 10 schools and colleges in and around Coimbatore from 20 September to 24 October. In all, 1,154 students took part in the competitions. At all the venues, the competitions were followed by a talk, an awards ceremony, and a skit. **Jamshedpur:** A cultural programme on 27 September which was attended by 400 people. **Kadapa:** Vivekananda Ratha, carriage, passed through Kadapa, Anantapur, and Kurnool districts from 7 September

to 5 October. In these districts, the Ratha visited about 150 educational institutions and other public places where public meetings and processions were held. **Malda:** A youths' convention on 10 September attended by 289 youths from 18 educational institutions. **Naora:** A public meeting on 8 September attended by 300 students. **Ponnampet:** Two public meetings on 11 and 27 September. The latter meeting was addressed by Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission and Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai. About 600 people took part in the programmes in all. **Rajkot:** (i) A total of 125 programmes in different educational institutions in Rajkot from 11 to 27 September. Each programme consisted of talks, recitation, and a quiz competition. In all, 23,224 students participated in the programmes. (ii) A youths' convention on 15 October attended by 650 youths. **Salem:** A drama at a school auditorium in the city on 14 October which was watched by 2,100 students from 17 schools. **Sarisha:** (i) Meetings and cultural competitions in 8 institutions on 11 September in which about 3,000 students took part. (ii) A youths' convention and a spiritual retreat on 22 September in which respectively 127 youths and 120 devotees took part. **Silchar:** Three conventions for devotees, school students, and college students from 29 September to 1 October, which were attended by 650 devotees, and 1,000 students and 112 teachers from a number of educational institutions. **Varanasi Home of Service:** (i) Cultural competitions in which about 70,000 students took part. (ii) Public meetings on 11 and 27 September. **Outside India: Durban, South Africa:** A Vedanta retreat in Dundee on 18 August, a devotees' convention at the centre on 24 August, and a special talk at Ladysmith sub-centre on 11 September. In all, 270 people attended the programmes. 



# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

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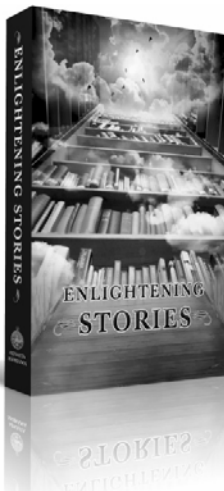
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## PILGRIM'S GUIDE TO THE HOLY TRIO IN KOLKATA



### Holy Mother's stay in 10/2 Bose Para Lane II

Swamiji returned from the West to Kolkata on 19 February 1897, and then in March, he went to Darjeeling for rest. Holy Mother returned to Calcutta via Burdwan in April. On April 28th returned to Calcutta. The next day he visited Holy Mother at 10/2 Bosepara Lane in Baghbazar. Holy Mother stood silently at the door of her own room, wearing her usual veil-like covering, waiting to see him after a gap of seven years. Like a devoted son, Swamiji fully prostrated himself before Holy Mother with deep reverence and humility. Holy Mother, deeply moved at the sight of Swamiji after an interval of seven years, stood speechless, as if in a trance. The whole atmosphere was surcharged with indescribable sublimity and divine bliss. When he made pranams, he did not touch her feet. And when Swamiji stood up after prostrating, he told the others who had come with him:



'Go and prostrate before the Mother, but don't touch her feet. She is so gracious, so tender and affectionate, that when one touches her feet she then readily draws unto and takes upon herself all the misery and suffering of

that soul, out of her infinite grace and compassion. Thereby she has to suffer silently for others' sake. Go slowly one by one and prostrate before her. Sincerely pray and ask for her blessings, but without verbal expression. She is ever in a superconscious state and understands everybody's mind.' As directed by Swamiji, all the devotees made silent prostrations before Mother, and Swamiji quietly stood in a corner of the veranda. Swamiji told the Mother, 'I feel and realize that I am a mere instrument of the Master. I went to America with your blessings, and when I succeeded in moving the people through my speeches and received tremendous ovations, I remembered at once the power of your blessings.' With great emotion, Swamiji then said, 'Mother, I want to spread the Master's message and establish an enduring organization quickly. I feel distressed that I cannot do things as quickly as I wish.' Holy Mother herself then spoke in a soft voice with maternal affection, 'Don't worry, what you have done and what you will do, will endure forever. You are born for this mission. Thousands will look upon you as an enlightened teacher of the world, and you will find before long that your ideas are taking practical shape.'



*In loving memory of Dr. Rina Bhar —Dr. Gopal Chandra Bhar*

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*The best guide in life is strength. In religion, as in all other matters, discard everything that weakens you, have nothing to do with it.*

*—Swami Vivekananda*



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